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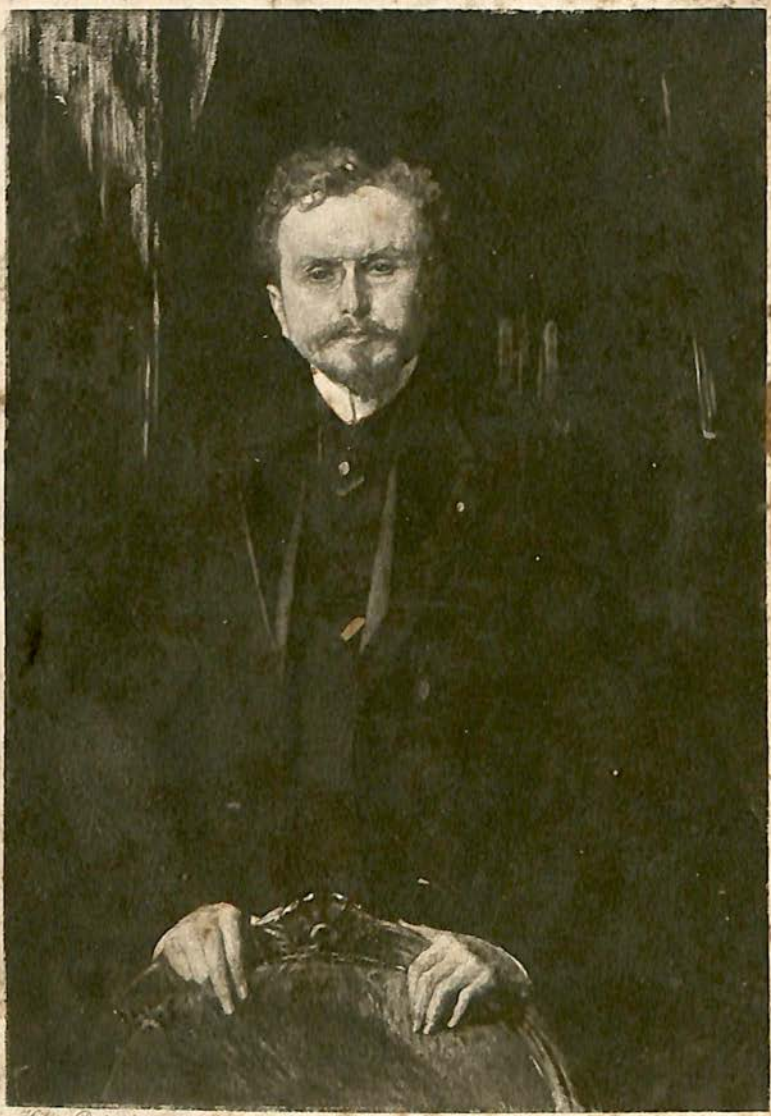

Holtzy Dujardin

Gabriel Hanotaux
from the picture by Benjamin Constant

CONTEMPORARY FRANCE

BY

GABRIEL HANOTAUX

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN CHARLES TARVER

With Portraits

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VOL. I

(1870–1873)

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

TO introduce M. Gabriel Hanotaux to Frenchmen would be superfluous; his name is already well known in his own country as that of a leading statesman and an author of high reputation. In England he is chiefly known as a Minister of Foreign Affairs who smoothed the path of diplomacy during the troubled period of the wars between Turkey and Greece, Spain and the United States of America. He also took an active part in settling questions as to delimitation of frontier in North Africa which had arisen between France and England; during his period of office the Madagascar expedition was decided upon.

Born in 1854, M. Hanotaux is still a comparatively young man, but he has behind him a political and literary career upon which older men would be entitled to look back with complacency. He is still engaged upon a monumental life of Cardinal Richelieu which has already won for him the Gobert prize, the highest honour which can be bestowed by the French Academy; since 1897 he has been an Academician. His more popular works, *L'Energie Française,* and *Le Choix d'une Carrière,* are marked by an ardent

patriotism, and strong common sense; they have been exceptionally well received in France.

In fact M. Hanotaux, alike by his administrative career and his proved literary competence, is singularly well qualified to overcome the difficulties of the great work of which the present volume is the first instalment. He is a keen patriot, but he is a wise patriot; he is a convinced Republican, but though he announces his Republican sympathies in his preface, his literary conscience has proved sufficiently robust to eliminate any excess of political partizanship from his narrative.

J. C. T.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I HAVE undertaken to narrate the History of Contemporary France from the month of February 1871 to the end of the year 1900.

The present volume comprises, along with the Government of M. Thiers, the end of the Franco-German War, the Peace Negotiations, the Commune, the Constitutional Crisis, the Debates in the National Assembly, the Liberation of the Territory. It concludes with the 24th of May, 1873.

The second volume will be devoted to the Presidency of Marshal MacMahon, and the Foundation of the Republic.

The third and fourth volumes will deal with the History of the Parliamentary Republic.

I have made arrangements so that the four volumes may follow one another in rapid succession.

The subject is vast and difficult. But I have seen the facts which I set forth. This work, moreover, is connected with the works which I have begun or published, and which all have, like the present book, but one object : France.

If I tried to go back to the real origin of this book, I should find it in the events with which the story begins : the war of 1870 and its immediate consequences.

I was at that time sixteen. The generation to which I belong was barely emerging from childhood : it saw everything, its intellect was matured by that cruel spectacle. I came to Paris to begin my studies some months after the Commune. The city was dejected, and there were traces of hidden agitation.

From that time pressing questions arose in me : What had been the causes of the greatness of France in the past ? What were the causes of her defeat ? What would be the moving forces in her approaching resurrection ?

My manhood has applied itself to the solution of the problems put by my youth. It has sometimes allowed itself to be diverted from its studies, but has never lost sight of them.

If our existence were not so short and fleeting we should review it again and again to reflect upon the lessons which it gives. In the haste to live we neglect too often the reasons for living. The events of which we have been spectators, in which we have taken part, are not studied by us. A people, still less even than a man, can return to its past of yesterday and profit by the sole effective experience, that which comes from contact with reality.

Every day the democracy is required to settle the most arduous problems, and fails to remember that they have been raised a hundred times already, and that the answer has already been given by itself, only yesterday.

Conscious of this lack of information, I have applied myself to contemporary history, and in spite of the perils of the subject, I have decided to write it from henceforth.

I will borrow an expression from the profession

which has long been my own : this book might be the " dossier " of the Democracy. I have proposed to myself to lay before the Democracy in the forthcoming pages a sufficient quantity of definite information, of documents which have been checked, of precedents which have been verified. I would wish the Democracy to pause one moment for reflection, and to consider its own acts and deeds, which in proportion as they are left behind become history.

Henri Martin wrote a Popular History of France. I continue his work and follow his example. Perhaps the circumstance will be remarked that in one and the same family two generations will have worked upon the same task in succession.

Writing for a Democracy, I was bound to aim at clearness, simplicity, rapidity ; to my readers I owed good faith and impartiality. However there could be no question of parting company with myself, and my life says plainly enough that in political matters, which are the chief subject of history, I have taken sides : I am a Republican.

I could have wished this work to be more complete without being longer, more exact without being more minute. But the facts of contemporary history are often without sufficient explanation, its motives difficult to disentangle or express.

I shall welcome eagerly and gratefully—need I say so ?—fresh information, corrections, criticisms, which may be addressed to me.

It remains to thank those who have helped me in the preparation of this first volume. In the first place my friend and careful secretary and collaborator, M. Henri Girard, whose unwearied labour has accompanied me from my first note to the last sheet of the proofs ; then many persons whose liberality

has showered upon me documents, information, reminiscences, advice.

To these kindly communications, I have owed precious collections proceeding from M. Thiers, even before they had been delivered, with discretion, to the public. I owe much to the memory of men who played a leading part in the events: Gambetta, Jules Ferry, Challemel-Lacour, Spuller: their conversations and their stories have remained present in my thoughts. I owe much to M. Pallain, who knows so many things, and tells them so gracefully; to my colleague, M. le Comte Othenin d'Haussonville, who was so good as to entrust to me the unpublished Journal of his father, Comte d'Haussonville; to General the Marquis d'Abzac; to my colleague, M. Léopold Delisle; to my excellent comrade, M. Mortreuil, general secretary of the National Library; to my friend, M. Pierre Bertrand, librarian at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; to M. Paul Hebert. I should never come to an end if I wished to mention all. May I be at least permitted lastly to thank the courageous publishers, who have not hesitated to follow me in this vast and difficult undertaking.

G. H.

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HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY FRANCE

THE GOVERNMENT OF M. THIERS

CHAPTER I

THE WAR

France in 1870—The Imperial Policy of Nationalities leads up to the War with Prussia—The Government of National Defence—The Conclusion of the Armistice—France after the War—The Elections—The National Assembly at Bordeaux—M. Thiers Chief of the Executive of February 8, 1871.

I

WAR was the logical result of the imperial political system; The 'Emperor' is by definition a military chief; a Bonaparte cannot fling aside the tradition which binds him to the most illustrious captain of modern times; in a word, Napoleon III had had the power to reign only by abandoning himself, body and soul, to the policy of intervention which was to light a conflagration in all four corners of Europe and agitate all her Governments. Like the illustrious founder of his race, he was pledged to war and condemned to a succession of victories.

In his youth the son of Queen Hortense was a man of concentration, ambition, resolution, and a fatalist. As age grew upon him, his activity decayed, and there was nothing left in him but a kind of melancholy resignation. His sallow face, to which the moustache and pointed beard gave an air of artificial make-up, was impassive. His colourless glance

defied interpretation. His small stature, the breadth of his shoulders, the shortness of his legs, gave him a thick-set, squat appearance; on horseback he was a prince again. The deliberate calm of his whole person failed to conceal his dominant feeling: uneasiness.

He himself gives the title of Musings to his reflections. His intelligence was active but limited; his imagination vast but confused. Those who came near to him thought him both indifferent and kindly. He proceeded to the action through the idea. His will was strong rather than sustained. He was not creative.

This second Bonaparte was in some sense a reduced copy of the first. There is a resemblance between the two careers. The one follows the other exactly. The same restless and ambitious youth; the same appreciation of the power of the masses; Consulate on the one side, Presidency on the other; the 18th of Brumaire on one side, on the other the 2nd of December; at the outset successful wars, and at the end, defeat. But the one had genius, the other ingenuity; the one had created the legend, the other followed in it; and if the careers are to this extent alike, the reason is that the Napoleonic ideal had become a second nature for the son of the Queen of Holland.

Imitators, however, act in accordance with their temperament and education; they necessarily suit themselves to circumstances and submit to the influence of their own times. Napoleon III belonged to the branch of the Bonapartes of Holland, that branch which History, now better informed, sees unrolling the long labour of its ambitions during the whole of the first half of the nineteenth century; they are the Beauharnais-Bonapartes, the fair

Bonapartes. They are contrasted with the dark Bonapartes, the Corsican Bonapartes who claimed to be the more direct heirs of the great Emperor, but who, in spite of their intelligence, their vigour and their furious charges, have been in the end tricked and set aside by the scientific and aristocratic intrigues of the first.[1]

These Beauharnais and these Taschers, who in fact through the agency of Barras had made the career of the little Corsican upstart, impressed traces of themselves strongly upon the dynasty. They had their heroine and their martyr, Josephine; their hero, Prince Eugene; and their muse, Queen Hortense. This lady is something more, she is a woman of action, and a woman with a head; she devoted her life to preparing her son's career. A woman who writes the *Memorial*, published in 1834 and tricks King Louis Philippe with the coolness and assurance which she herself describes in it, knows where she is going. Already in 1831 she foresaw 1848.

Of her sons, Louis, the second, the godson of the great Emperor was her favourite, her "beau Dunois." She placed herself in open revolt against her husband, the father, the unadventurous King Louis, because he wished for peace, and the Queen and her children thought of nothing but contest.

Pupil of such a mother, Louis Napoleon lived for nothing but politics. His participation in Roman affairs in 1831, the attempts at Strasburg, at Boulogne, the escape from Ham, all these deeds are united to a preconceived system, which he himself explains to the sagacious M. Vieillard: "You, if you were to see a man abandoned and alone in a

[1] v. Frédéric Masson, *Joséphine de Beauharnais*, Introduction.

desert island, would say to him, 'Do not attempt to build a little vessel with trunks of trees which will be sunk by a storm, but wait till chance brings a deliverer in your way,' 'Bah! I should say to him; 'use all your efforts to make yourself a boat, when your boat is finished fling yourself boldly into it . . .' For after all what remains from this concatenation of little deeds and little struggles? An immense thing for me. In 1833 the Emperor and his son were dead. There was no longer any heir to the imperial cause; France no longer knew any such. For the People, the line was broken off. All the Bonapartes were dead. Well! I joined the thread together again. I effected my own resurrection."

Queen Hortense was certainly the first to discover that in Europe the Bonapartes must look for their support from the side of the peoples. The great man had dictated this crowning maxim from St. Helena. The Queen, who was capable of thinking for herself, gathered it up, and turned it over with the happy confidence of an entirely feminine Machiavelli. "Be always on the watch," she writes to her sons; "watch over propitious opportunities . . . Be the friend of everybody . . . It is so easy to gain the affections of the people. It has the simplicity of a child. If it sees that it is the object of our concern, it lets us do what we please; it only revolts when it believes there is injustice and treachery . . . But it never believes this, if it is addressed with sympathy and gentleness. It is always Johnny Goodfellow."[1]

Under the Restoration in France the cause of the

[1] *La Reine Hortense en Italie et en Angleterre.* Fragment extracted from her unpublished memoirs written by herself.—Paris, 1834; cf. G. Duval, *Napoleon III*, p. 74.

people was the cause of the Revolution. The Bonapartist party drew near to the liberal or republican party. When the Bourbons were replaced by the Orleans family, the latter quickly forgot the origin of their position; a government cannot continue to be the partisan of insurrection. The Bonapartes were then the only fallen family which could unite its cause with that of an inflexible opposition. Queen Hortense said proudly to Louis Philippe, "It is we who are the popular kings." But that could only last so long as the Bonapartes did not reign. If they reigned, they too were obliged to turn upon their start. Thus the internal policy of the Bonapartes was necessarily contradictory and without a future.

Bonapartism and the Peoples

This was not the case with their foreign policy. In Europe the cause of nationalities was the popular cause. Here at once was found a great task, and a support worth considering. To be at the call of national independence was to assert for France the part of the soldier dominated by an ideal which she has so often played in the world. It was to drive through Europe once again the consequences of the principles of the Revolutions; Bonapartism then represented above all things a foreign policy.

On the morrow of the day on which Napoleon I fell, the peoples that had hated him so deeply had woken up Bonapartist. Louis Philippe, in proclaiming the policy of non-intervention, followed in his international relations the system which he applied in his domestic policy, that of fettering a movement while seeming to serve it. This attitude on the part of France had been the cruellest of disillusions for the peoples roused by the trumpet-call of 1830. Louis

Philippe," said the Italian Diego Soria, "wishing to make the kings of Europe forgive him for a throne which they accused him of having usurped, had no objection to offering them the liberty of all the peoples in exchange for his crime, a magnificent service which he alone could render in his capacity as sovereign of that very France upon which all the free peoples of Europe rested their hopes with a mad confidence."

Louis Philippe, then, son of the barricades, and descended from the ancient dynasties of Europe, was destined to be without an external policy. This is the rock upon which his reign, otherwise sagacious and prosperous, was bound to founder. And against him he had the permanent opposition of a party which counted in its past Austerlitz, and in its programme the liberty of the peoples; of a party which was altogether foreign policy, altogether propagandist, intervention, and "glory"—the party of the Bonapartes!

Events and the short-sighted calculations of politicians prepared the advent of the new Napoleon. Louis Philippe had brought back the ashes of the Emperor, and he had thus given the heir to the name the opportunity for spreading broadcast among the people that proclamation of which the whole effect was condensed in the date. "Fortress of Ham, December 15, 1840," and in this phrase: "A ship of France commanded by a noble young man went to claim your ashes (the Emperor Napoleon is addressed), but in vain did you look for any of your own race upon the deck; your family was not there."

Abroad other events had followed one another: the emancipation of Greece, the deep impression pro-

duced by the "Prisons" of Silvio Pellico awakening attention to the sorrows of Italy, the campaign conducted in the whole liberal press in favour of Poland —these were so many trial events indicating the importance which the cause of nationalities was going to take. On the other hand, in circumstances in which the honour or estimation of France was concerned, the government of Louis Philippe had revealed the difficulties of a policy composed of procrastination and feebleness.

In Belgium there had not been the courage to accept a throne; in the Egyptian affair there had been a withdrawal in face of the coalition of Europe. The head had been bowed in the affair of Pritchard. The finest army in Europe exhausted itself in the conquest of Algeria, a heritage of the Restoration. In one word, the Government of July without allies, without a programme, consigned the enthusiasm of France to a regimen of disillusion.

What a contrast with the Napoleonic legend, whose triumphs were unceasingly recalled by literature and the press, and whose very disasters were enveloped in clouds of glory.

Lamartine had given utterance to the well-known phrase, "France is bored." But in 1848 the provisional Government had had neither the power nor the will to resume the tradition of the policy of the Revolution.

The Policy of Nationalities

So then the heir to this tradition could be a Napoleon alone, and the pretender threw out in his *Idées Napoléoniennes* the formula of the foreign policy of Bonapartism: "The Emperor's policy consisted in founding a solid association of Europe, in resting his system on the foundation of *complete nationalities*, and the satisfaction of common interests."

This formula was a criticism, but it was also a pledge. It meant that the work of the Holy Alliance was to be taken up again, but in a contrary direction; this phrase was attributed to Napoleon I in speaking of the allied sovereigns and the Congress of Vienna: "They have stolen my idea." The phrase from the memoirs of St. Helena was repeated: "One of my greatest thoughts had been the combination, the concentration, of the same geographical peoples, that have been dissolved, disintegrated, by revolutions and policy. I would have wished to make each one of these peoples a single and organic national body . . . The first sovereign who shall honestly embrace the cause of the peoples in the next great general fight will find himself at the head of all Europe, and will be able to try anything he pleases." [1]

So then the treaties of 1815 were to be torn up. With words and promises like these France was inflamed.

When the pretender became Emperor, France had to receive her reward. It may be said of the Emperor Napoleon III that he had placarded his foreign policy on the walls in anticipation. This probably explains the fact that his reign had no diplomacy. He employed his diplomatists such as Morny in domestic affairs in the region of his daily difficulties. But abroad his action was simplicity itself, like the thought of the peoples to whom he appealed. The Crimean war, the Italian war, the German war are three plays in the same trilogy, hardly interrupted by the blood-stained episodes of China and Mexico.

The force of this propagandist policy in Europe was such that Napoleon III was for a moment the

[1] Vol. ii. p. 419.

arbitrator among the Powers, because he had the peoples on his side. If he had always been victorious, he would have carried away the Liberals of all countries, even those of France. Many of them, and of the most reserved among them, such as Henri Martin, Edgar Quinet, were seduced, when he announced his determination to deliver Italy, so powerful was the sentiment of international solidarity at that time.[1]

Napoleon III and Europe

But the traditional diplomacy, whose measures were all put off the familiar track by Napoleon III, was to take its revenge. By means of slow subterranean combinations it dammed up the torrents of the Revolution and the Empire, just as the scientific calculations of the classical strategists were to get the better of the *furia francese*.

Napoleon, in insurrection against Europe, thought he would find a point of support in the English alliance. England, always concerned with her commercial interests, grew with the aid of the nephew of the Emperor whom she had conquered. At the outset she accompanied him in all his adventures, free to quit him when he was once deeply engaged. She knew how to stop him at the decisive moment, and to snatch the fruits of victory from him when the due time came. Thus it was in the Crimea, in China, in Italy, in Mexico. And at last, when the Franco-German War put the fate of Europe in suspense, she failed him once again.

As for the other great Powers, they all had their grievances against the impetuosity of Napoleon and of France. The grievance of Russia was Poland;

[1] Théophile Dufour, *Lettres à Quinet*, p. 139.

of Austria, Italy. Lastly, Prussia, who had long held herself in reserve, had had growing anxieties at the time of the affair of the Duchies, at the epoch of the perilous campaign of Sadowa, in the Luxemburg affair. Further, she was the predestined rival of France in a capital question in which the diplomacy of tradition had all the advantages, the question of the Rhine.

The Question of the Rhine

This is an ancient bone of contention. It has to do with the very constitution of Europe. In the germ at the death of Charlemagne it has its point of departure in modern history, when the question of another succession was opened, whose rights are not yet determined, the heritage of Burgundy.

The valley of the Rhine and Meuse has a physiognomy of its own in Europe. This vast region is one of the most thickly peopled, and the richest in the world. In it live active, gentle, intelligent, and industrious populations. The great works of art and the great inventions which gave the impulse to modern civilization appeared there first—gunpowder, painting in oil, printing. In the fifteenth century there was no country more civilized than the vast dominion which was then called "The Burgundies."

This Empire, whose glory is but little known, and whose history will one day explain that of Europe, formed as it were a powerful buffer State between France and Germany. But it had its causes of internal weakness. The chief were its too elongated form and the want of convenient access to the sea. However that may be, the existence of this intervening Power was compromised by the imprudent acts of Charles the Bold; and when he died, his daughter, Mary of Burgundy, lived long enough to

open the serious problem from which Europe is still suffering by her dissensions with Louis XI and her marriage with Maximilian of Austria. Louis XV rightly said, when he visited the tomb of Mary of Burgundy at Bruges, "There is the cradle of our wars."

The Heritage of Burgundy

This other Poland was partitioned. Germany and France have been disputing over its fragments for four centuries.

On the German side, Austria and Prussia have successively guided the campaign, while France is alone on her side.

When the doctrine of nationalities had finished its European tour, and when after having delivered the principalities of the Danube, having made a united Greece and a united Italy, having stirred the Polish question, it began the upheaval of Germany, the policy of the Emperor was taken by surprise.

Principles were opposed to interests. Were we to abandon ourselves to the stream and, as we had aided the formation of an Italian nationality, to allow a German nationality to grow up at our gates? The Emperor Napoleon believed at first that he could continue to be consistent with himself. In 1863, at the moment when the affair of the Duchies put the question of German unity, he said: "I shall always be consistent in my conduct. If I have fought for the independence of Italy, if I have lifted up my voice for the Polish nationalities, I cannot have other sentiments in Germany, nor obey other principles." [1]

But then this involved giving a peculiar strength to the Power which was taking the initiative in this work, as Piedmont had done in Italy, that is to say, to Prussia; it involved organizing and disciplining the forces of Germany for a fresh start, and, Prussia

[1] Émile Ollivier, *L'Empire libéral*, vol. vii. p. 147.

being the mistress of the Rhine Provinces, it meant re-opening under conditions more dangerous than at any other time that formidable dispute about the heritage of Burgundy which it had been so difficult to close with Austria.

The old European problem was seen to reappear. After having followed the bright and popular doctrine of nationalities, we were horrified to find ourselves face to face with the traditional policy of the struggle for supremacy on the Continent.

Everything collapsed at once beneath the Emperor Napoleon. He was no longer master of his domestic policy: it may be said that he had abandoned his system on the day on which he had lent his hands to the constitution of the "Liberal Empire." But he lost every justification for his existence on the day when he saw turned against him the principle which in Europe, and by rebound in France, had made the whole of his reputation, and the whole of his strength, the principle of nationalities.

The War of 1870

His diplomacy thus disabled struggled painfully in this tangle of difficulties. He did not even know how to prepare the war which everybody felt to be impending. He himself, in the self-justifying Memoirs published in his name, recognizes "that our effectives were inadequate, our armaments in course of transformation, our Headquarters Staff ill prepared at the moment when the skilful tactics of Bismarck put the policy of France in the wrong and drew it on to the declaration of war."[1] The documents emanating from the German statesman now establish incontestably that he

[1] *Oeuvres posthumes et autographes inédits de Napoléon III en exil*, par le Comte de La Chapelle. Paris, Lachaud, 1873. Imprimés à Londres.

wanted war to attain his ends; he perverted facts, altered important documents,[1] and this belated revelation justifies the observation which was recalled at the very moment when hostilities broke out, "The real author of a war is not the man by whom it is declared, but the man by whom it is rendered necessary."

September 2, 1870

Better prepared and sooner ready, the Prussians crushed the French armies during their formation. After two disastrous battles, our lines were forced and the territory of the nation invaded.

But nothing was as yet finally lost. Around Metz, France had a still formidable army and at Chalons forces wanting perhaps in cohesion, but which could be counted on. It was necessary to assemble these troops under Paris in order to cover the capital. The Regency opposed this measure of safety. At Paris the return of the beaten Emperor was dreaded. MacMahon hesitated. Was he to follow his own inspiration, retreat towards the Seine, or should he obey the directions of the political power, march to the north-east in order to effect his junction with Bazaine? A telegram from Marshal Bazaine announcing Montmédy as his objective decided him.[2] He no longer thought of anything but going to the rescue of his colleague. The union of the two forces would have been formidable. But the Prussian armies outstripped MacMahon. Instead of joining Bazaine, the army of Chalons engulfed itself in the funnel of Sedan, where, after an heroic resistance, it was annihilated.

[1] See *Souvenirs du Prince de Bismarck*, vol. ii. p. 103.

[2] See the opinion of General Schmidtz. *Journal des Goncourt*. t.v. p. 15.

At Sedan Napoleon III did more than surrender his sword: he shattered his crown.

Napoleon III prisoner

Legally, the Emperor being a prisoner, there was no longer a Government. He himself recognizes that "by the force of circumstances he was deprived of the rights which he held from the nation." On the other hand, the decree which conferred the Regency upon the Empress only delegated to her a portion of authority. Thus, by the admission of all, the catastrophy of Sedan opened a political crisis; according to the expression of M. Thiers, there was "a vacancy of power."

September 4, 1870

The Empress had summoned the Chambers without even consulting the Emperor; so evident is it that in such circumstances the Imperial Government itself pleaded guilty to a want of competence. When the Legislative Body had been invaded, and the impossibility demonstrated of giving reality to the proposition of M. Thiers as to the constitution of a Council of Defence taken from the Assembly, when the Empress had left the Tuileries, who was then going to govern France, to attempt to repel the invasion, to organize the defence of Paris?

The Revolution was completed spontaneously, and in virtue of a supreme necessity. Furthermore it came into being "without the shedding of a drop of blood, without the loss of liberty to a single individual." Thus it was permissible for M. Jules Favre to affirm in his circular of the 6th of September to the representatives of France at foreign Courts that the population of Paris "did not pronounce the fall of Napoleon III and his dynasty, but simply registered it in the name of the public safety."

II

The Government of National Defence

Under conditions such as these, in the midst of inevitable confusion, was constituted the Government of National Defence. The men of the 4th of September canalised the Revolution by holding in the party of violence. They were right in saying, "We are not in power, but in jeopardy."

Paris is in the habit of governing France. For two centuries in this centralized country the word of command has come from the capital. So, from the very first, nobody was surprised to see Paris take possession in some sort of the vacant power and entrust it to her representatives.

Paris was furthermore in an exceptional situation. A strong place, an entrenched camp, a piece of machinery indispensable to the normal life of the nation, she was soon to become the objective of the hostile armies. Rightly or wrongly, men clung persistently to the idea that inside her walls Paris enclosed the safety and the honour of the land. The country was not yet habituated to defeat. Nobody thought of the future campaigns which were to follow one another on the Loire, in the north, in the east, in the centre. Paris was the supreme hope, and the supreme thought.

There was constituted then, at the Hôtel de Ville on the 4th of September, not so much the Government of France as a grand local council commissioned to dispute the walls of Paris with the Prussians. This decision, natural as it was, was destined to have the gravest consequences in the future.

The Men of September 4

The men who found themselves thus suddenly carried to power were indisputably animated by the sentiments of the

purest patriotism; some had acquired in the deliberative assemblies a great reputation or a certain notoriety. They were the devoted servants of the democracy. They knew how to speak to the people. The tenacious struggle which they had upheld against the Empire added to their credit, for they were justified by events.

But these deputies, these publicists, these partymen had up to now been unable to acquire experience; they knew nothing of the direction of public business. If there existed among them a genuine statesman, he was himself unaware of the fact.

The only help for France, in the terrible circumstances through which she was passing, was either an unexpected victory or a successful negotiation. Now, the Government placed at its head a general who had no confidence in victory.

October 1870 He entrusted his diplomacy to an admirable orator, who, the very day after he entered upon his functions, alarmed Europe by proclaiming the principles of the Revolution, and closed the door to any practical negotiation by addressing himself to France rather than to the chancelleries, by holding a style of language which was certainly high-spirited, but which in his mouth could not but pledge the future to no purpose.

The very origin of this Government made it commit one of the gravest errors. Instead of leaving Paris, threatened with investment, to defend herself, and going into the provinces to organize resistance there, it allowed itself to be enclosed in a besieged fortress, only sending in the first instance a Deputation without authority and without prestige to Tours.

It has been said that all the members of the Gov-

ernment wished to share the common danger, and that to leave Paris was to abandon her to anarchy. But the first duty of a Government is not to fight, but to govern. It would have been possible to leave the command of the besieged town to a general whose authority would probably have been less a subject of discussion.

Perhaps in this way would have been avoided the day's work of the 31st of October, the check to the armistice negotiated by M. Thiers, and later on the drama of the Commune. Who can tell? Free to move as he pleased, M. Jules Favre might perhaps have worked upon the feelings of Europe at the Conference of London. As for the Provinces, which in the common peril still afforded the resources necessary to continue the struggle, they would have been grouped without difficulty around a government which had drawn near to them.

Paris besieged, the Government enclosed, this meant the whole country delivered over to the chances of improvised measures and the caprice of events. There is a lesson which should be drawn from these piercing facts: the Government of a people struggling for its existence must be free, even though it should be compelled to retreat to the most distant province, or even cross the frontier; it must not expose itself to the fevered tempers of a siege, nor let itself be driven into capitulations.

Authority of the new Government

When the Government was constituted, it found itself confronted by an imperative duty, to put Paris in a state of defence; and by a formidable problem, was the war to be continued?

It acquitted itself of its duty without a sign of weakness: Paris was able by her heroic resistance to astound the world.

First of all, was it necessary to treat? A subsidiary question immediately declared itself: Had the Government of the 10th of September the necessary authority to conclude a peace? As to *de facto* power, its existence had not been ratified by universal suffrage, the basis of public right in France since 1848. It is true that the Powers entered into relations with it, but that was simply a necessity created by the situation. As for the victor, he had every interest in multiplying conferences with all those who claimed to hold authority. By this trafficking he had nothing in view but his own interests. His selection from among the different competitors would have been a consecration of the worst kind.

So then, previous to any negotiation, it would have been necessary to convoke a constituent Assembly without delay. But here again legal right was in conflict with the facts. If the country was consulted, how would the invaded Provinces be able to give their votes freely? They could only do so with the consent of the invader. But the invader, in order to give his adhesion to such a course, would demand as a preliminary step the signing of an armistice. Now, to conclude this armistice it was necessary to accept the already rigorous conditions imposed by the victor.

It would then be inaccurate to claim:

1. That if the Empire had survived the disaster of Sedan, it would have immediately concluded peace;

2. And that if the Government of National Defence had put an end to the war from the moment that it was constituted, it would have saved the integrity of the territory.

The Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne had barely arrived at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when he said, on

the 16th of October to Lord Lyons, the English Ambassador, that there were two conditions indispensable to peace: the maintenance of the existing frontiers and of the dynasty. On the other hand, on the 3rd of September, Count de Palikao, President of the Council, after having announced to the Legislative body the catastrophe of Sedan and the captivity of the Emperor, declared that "France would not abandon her efforts till she had driven the Prussians from the national soil." Thus the Imperial Government on its deathbed professed on the question of peace or war the same sentiments which were soon so loftily proclaimed by M. Jules Favre.

In a word, it is certain that Prussia from the moment of her first successes had decided not to treat without obtaining an important territorial concession.

When Napoleon III constituted himself a prisoner, the question of peace was incidentally raised. Already at that period Bismarck indicated as conditions the union of Alsace and of a part of Lorraine, and the payment of an indemnity of four milliards. A still more characteristic act is the decree of the 14th of August, 1870, nominating Count Bismarck-Bohlen, Governor-General of Alsace.[1]

At this date the Prussian Headquarters Staff published a map assigning as limits to the new government very nearly those which were to be inscribed in the treaty of the peace preliminaries. This was the map, the famous map with the green border, which served as a basis of the future negotiations, and it is expressly designated in the first article of the treaty of peace. Thus the resolutions of the Prussian Chancellery, or at the least of the Headquarters'

[1] Édouard Simon, *L'Empereur Guillaume et son règne*, p. 342.

Staff, were fixed as soon as the first military successes were obtained.[1]

The fact is that, in order to treat on the 4th of September, it would have been necessary to sacrifice Strasburg, which was still holding out, and perhaps Metz, which was not yet invested. The Government of National Defence would have put its signature to such a document in vain; an outburst of public indignation would have torn it to pieces.

Furthermore, the men of the 4th of September had received from the nation a kind of mandate of desperation. They could justify their existence only by war to the bitter end.

Public opinion may be reproached with having been led astray by the magnificent memories of 1792 and of glorious years in which France wrestled alone against the armies of united Europe, with not having observed the differences of the time and the circumstances; this is open to discussion. But it is none the less to its honour to have thought that France was not bound to surrender after the first engagement and to have refused to submit to so cruel a sacrifice so long as a glimmer of hope remained.

Strasburg defended herself with heroism. Bazaine, who still enjoyed universal confidence, was at the head of a considerable force, the flower of the French armies. There remained Paris, erect and armed! Nobody could foresee, and in any case nobody would have been willing to admit, the possibility of the series of catastrophes which were going to overwhelm the country in succession.

[1] Colonel Laussedat, *La Délimitation de la Frontière franco-allemande.*

Tentatives in the Way of Negotiation

Not despairing of the continuance of the struggle, the Government of National Defence was, however, unwilling to pronounce itself without full knowledge. It was by way of learning from the very mouth of the victor the conditions of peace, or, at the least, of an armistice. M. Jules Favre went to Ferrières to demand them of Count Bismarck. At Ferrières no agreement could be arrived at: historically, somewhat of a misunderstanding exists as to the conditions which were offered to M. Jules Favre by Bismarck. The Government was also concerned about the opinion of Europe, and charged M. Thiers to supply him with information on this point. M. Thiers, who had not thought that he was under any obligation to figure in the Government of National Defence, did not decline the commission entrusted to him.[1]

Europe was deeply moved by the misfortunes of France, but had adopted the resolution not to interfere directly between the belligerents. Russia and England, however, created facilities for a fresh interview between M. Thiers and Count Bismarck.

This took place at Versailles. M. Thiers says that he "believes he may conjecture that two milliards with Alsace, and a part of Lorraine, without Metz, might be the conditions of a peace signed on the spot." He contemplated in company with Bismarck the eventuality of elections to take place immediately without an armistice and without revictualling, but the disturbances of 31st of October in Paris broke off these discussions.

[1] See Jules Favre, *Le Gouvernement de la Défense nationale*. cf. *Notes et Souvenirs de M. Thiers*, p. 20.

Meanwhile France understood the extent of the disaster which threatened her integrity. The fury of patriotism waxed stronger from them. In the Provinces and in Paris there were desperate efforts. Paris allowed herself to be driven back upon famine. The Provinces, in which Gambetta's splendid ardour awakened courage and utilized every force at his disposition, improvised armies. There was still fighting over the whole country, even after Metz had capitulated. The armies of the Loire, the army of the north, and the army of the east fell one after another.

January 1871

Paris at last, reduced to famine, was bound to surrender. Her fall was the fall of France.

The Armistice of January 28

On the 28th of January, 1871, an armistice was signed for the convocation of a National Assembly, whose mandate should be to pronounce upon the preliminaries of peace.

Convocation of a National Assembly

A decree dated January the 29th, and published in Paris and in the large towns the following day, convoked the electors for the 8th of February, 1871.

During this short period of ten days France had been compelled to take stock of her position. She had been able to reflect under the sensation of errors committed, of present sorrows, and in anxiety for the uncertain day which was dawning.

This great national consultation resembled the moral inventory drawn up by the nation of its losses, its forces, and its hopes: hours of misery, whose pangs must, however, be revived in order to understand the events, and as an abiding lesson for those who never saw these things.

France after the War

The war and the final defeat had this bitter drop for the men who witnessed them, that they all had something with which to reproach themselves: they could have said, like that Pope of the sixteenth century speaking of the Reformation, "We have all sinned; all." France was not only smitten: she was punished.

The most cruel of castigations for a united nation was the universal sensation of disunion. Paris and the Provinces, the Provinces with one another through the agency of Paris, have for centuries been living one same life, and breathing with the same rhythmic movement. Now, in consequence of the siege, men felt themselves isolated, lost, without mutual contact, without mutual ties. The breaking up of a family gives but a poor idea of this laceration, of this bewilderment. France had been obliged to do without Paris for six months; the Provinces themselves had ceased to hold communication with one another except by rare messages, uncertain rumours, distant rumblings of cannon, or flights of carrier pigeons. There had been a cessation of the respiration in common. This interruption was in itself a malady, an agony.

Nothing can bring back the gasping life of those last weeks, when with their eyes turned to heaven men waited for the news, the unexpected, the miracle, the victory always predicted and never won. A kind of enthusiasm, ever again deceived, kept body and mind on the stretch up to the fatigue of evening and the restless rest of broken slumbers, interrupted by the alarm of unexpected sounds or the terrors of silence.

In this isolation and this attitude of expectation men sought one another, men met in groups in

open places, in the empty streets, under the lowering wintry sky; they discussed the rare telegrams, the proclamations of the Government of National Defence, the phrases, the unvarying phrases, "Retreat in good order," "Levy in mass," "Conquer or die." The old men shook their heads, and youths tried to understand, wide-eyed with amazement at this unjust and cruel entrance upon life.

France missed Paris. It was as if the faculty of thinking had been taken away from her to leave her only those of feeling and suffering. The slowly moving wisdom of the provincial mind, sinking from one disillusion to another, but ill understood what had really happened.

Effects of the Invasion in the Provinces

What then! After a reign so brilliant, so rapid a defeat, then, suddenly, ruin, the suspension of life, eight months of sorrows and sacrifices, the summer coming to an end, then the autumn, then the winter, the invasion creeping on like an oil-stain, infecting the cities, the towns, the villages, the hamlets; the arrival of the Uhlans with their long mantles, their tolpacks, lance or carbine in hand, in little bands, furtive and inquisitional, the trot of their horses on the deserted road, the requisitions, the demands for quarters, the promiscuity, the smile of servility, fury in the heart, and the cup of shame; then alarms, deeds of violence, the mocking whistle of the fife, the dull roll of drums, spikes of helmets, and the *Wacht-am-Rhein* rising from the plains on the evening after a battle . . .

Every family was smitten, savings destroyed, hidden, or threatened, houses abandoned, fields deserted, homes decimated.

The men were all gone: first the soldiers, then

the reserves, the recruits, the *francs-tireurs*. From time to time the maimed were seen returning, the sick, or the prisoners escaping from a fortress, after crossing immense districts in darkness, after swimming rivers in the depths of winter to get home, and there die. From the depths of the country men set out every morning in their carts to go and get news at the towns, and the news was always bad; the women had been obliged to take the management of the households and of business, and even, in the north and east, to face the enemy. Provinces which had not seen the smoke of a foreigner's bivouac since the hundred years' war had been occupied for long months. Mothers brooded over their tall boys with their eyes, asking if they too must be death's victims on the morrow.

These pangs had been driven deep into the heart of the Provinces by one blow after another, and the Provinces asked themselves if they had been well guided, if that brilliant and illumined Paris had done all her duty. Mistrust reigned now. And furthermore Paris no longer exercised the daily dictatorship of her press, her ideas, her seduction. There was no news from her. Nobody knew what had become of her.

The first details, spread abroad as soon as the gates had been opened, were greedily listened to. An immense reciprocal pouring out of news was exchanged from one end of the country to the other as to the events which had taken place during the long separation.

The Siege of Paris

The Provinces had suffered much; but Paris had suffered yet more. A besieged Paris, an airless Paris, compressed behind her forts, in her girdle of walls, strangled in her

pride and her fruitless fury: there was something terrible in the bare idea. Two million five hundred thousand men imprisoned for five months, nothing of the kind had ever yet been seen on earth. Paris had been disabled by herself, by her numbers, her weight, her inertia: she had voluntarily submitted to this torture, but at the cost of an expenditure of nervous energy which had maddened her.

Between the sombre and resigned resolve of the Provinces and the wrath, at first calm, then irritable, of Paris there was a want of harmony on which explanations were made badly and in haste. Paris told the story of the grip of the siege, the enthusiasm of the early days, the faith in the new men, the spirit of all, and the sacrifices for which all alike were prepared. She told of the ramparts manned by all, "M. Victor Hugo's képi symbolizing this situation"; of the proclamations of the Government, read at first with enthusiasm, then with surprise, lastly with irony; of the general and continued demand for the "sortie en masse," of the hesitations of the chiefs, of the Governor's famous plan, of the growing deceptions, of the violence of the extreme parties, of Discord installing herself in the besieged town, of the gradual decline of popular men; then the weary waiting, hopes always aroused, always disappointed, men's eyes turning to the sky expecting the arrival of carrier pigeons, harbingers of deliverance or victory, the miscroscopic letter read and re-read by groups, saying so little, and that little too much; men spoke of Bazaine, Chanzy, Faidherbe, Bourbaki, of the loud shouts of one day, of the silence of the morrow; lastly of the roar of the first shells at night announcing the bombardment in which nobody believed, of the indignation, of the

sombre elation, of children running through the streets after the bursting of shells, of Paris betaking itself on Sundays to the quarters where the rain of projectiles was falling, of the emigration from the whole left bank of the Seine, of hospitals and public buildings bombarded, of the shells at Saint Sulpice, at the Salpêtrière, and the Pantheon; then the famine, the strange meats, cats, rats, the elephant from the Jardin des Plantes, the price of provisions, the black bread, the rations, the long waits at the doors of the butchers and bakers, the want of fuel, the felling of the trees in the Bois de Boulogne, and the squares, the streets all night in blackness: they spoke of the epidemics, the rising mortality, ten thousand men cut down, the feeble, the infants smitten first; and how many were there who on feeling themselves attacked went to drag out their miserable agony in the bosoms of their families! of the ill-omened birth of those who came into the world during these dark days:

> . . . Ah! nouvelle venue innocente et rêvant,
> Vous avez pris, pour naître, une heure singulière.

Lastly, they told of the fury and the despair on feeling that nothing was being done, that perhaps nothing could be done, the convulsive but powerless struggles of the agony, Champigny, Bèzenval, the imprudent words, "Dead or victorious," "The Governor of Paris will not capitulate," and the final bitterness of the capitulation, with the vague sensation that so many efforts, so many sacrifices, had perhaps been of no avail.

These confidences were interchanged sorrowfully with little precise details, in every family as soon as it was united, with tears, with private mourning, with the thought of the absent who were prisoners far

away, and fears for those of whom nobody knew what had been their fate, and who were never to return.

But above everything there hovered, like a dull cry and a wailing made up of all bewailings, the mourning for the fatherland.

Then all had amounted to nothing but blindness and disillusion! Blindness of the soldiers! those veteran bands of Algeria, of the Crimea and of Italy, with their unsullied flags, had known nothing but defeats and capitulations! Blindness of the patriots! In vain had they placed their faith in the formulas of the Revolution: in the "levies in mass," "the voluntary enlistments," "the free troops," the National Guards, and the *Marseillaise*! Blindness of the humanitarians! they could not get over this orgy of militarism after they had so long preserved their faith in peace and kept up the fable of a sentimental, dreamy Germany. Blindness to facts! men had refused to believe in defeat even after Froeschwiller, even after Sedan, even after Metz; they had lived in a dream from which they expected a glorious awakening every morning, and the hideous nightmare had only gathered a deeper gloom. Blindness in ideas! there had been faith in the duty of France towards other nations, in the readiness to assist, in the resurrection of nationalities, in populations delivered and grateful. Now the finished work turned round upon ourselves. Blindness as to Europe! we believed ourselves loved: we were hated. France could have repeated the words of Christ, "Lord, Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The world was filled with the apotheosis of Bismarck. General Trochu, the chief responsible for the defence, has himself said that up to the last hour he believed in the intervention of the American Re-

public . . . When the gates of Paris were opened, he got sight of the telegrams of President Grant:

Want of foresight, incompetence, ruin, the triumph of might over right, the allotment of a people like a herd of cattle without any previous consultations of their wishes: what an awakening!

The State of public Feeling

Thus to this generation the understanding of life seemed to have returned, so completely had it unlearned history in its simple absent-mindedness. The men of strong feelings were even more unfortunate than the rest: they were crushed, and they felt themselves slightly ridiculous.

For the greatest pain to a lively and sensitive people was the contrast between expectations and results. Yesterday France was believed to be so great; she was seen to be so beautiful! Men thought that even in her defeat she defended "the cause of mankind"; Edgar Quinet was still writing to this effect on the 9th of September, 1870. Not only the courtiers of the dynasty, but everybody, poets, priests, philosophers, historians, prophets, the men of the Revolution, the banished, all said it, incessantly repeated it. And France lay there, gasping! Ah! the bitter cry of pain kept down in every breast when the thought came that this was what they had made of France!

And now it was necessary to live; it was necessary to start life afresh; but could it be done? Could the fragments be gathered together and recognize one another in the midst of the ruins? Would strength be found again? blood, since so much had flowed? The enemy was everywhere. His shadow watched over the misfortune and imposed restraint on too lively sorrows. He lived in abundance seated at our hearths. The towns were impoverished:

paper money alone was known now; the ransom was to be enormous; hands were wanting, for the men were still far off. And then, this, all this was nothing. How could the supreme sacrifice be accepted, the dismemberment already half seen; the two sisters torn from the home, the separation, ordained and to be sanctioned, if there was to be peace? Who would dare to resist the cruel sacrifice, or to sign the unhallowed deed? Men's minds were surrendered to different sentiments varying between despair and savage determination. France was no longer herself, and because of her disunion there was heard in her the distant rumbling of another supreme crisis at the moment when she was obliged to resume possession of her senses and to provide herself with a new government.

III

The Elections

Amid these sensations of hideous pain and still more hideous anxiety the elections of the 8th of February, 1871, took place under the eye of the enemy.

In forty-three departments postal communication was forbidden, and circulation in the departments under occupation was very nearly impossible. In that part of our territory the electoral decrees were posted up by the agency of the German authorities!

How, in this universal disorganization could conclusions have been arrived at as to the institutions which were to be given to France? How, in the universal sorrow, could it have been possible to wrest attention from the insistent preoccupation which pressed upon the minds of all? *Peace* or *War*? there could be no other question. Even a glimpse of the morrow was barely visible.

Thus France, pressed for time, confined herself on the 5th of February, 1871, to the dilemma propounded by the second article of the agreement for the armistice: "The object of the armistice thus concluded is to permit the Government of National Defence to convoke a freely elected Assembly, which shall decide on the question, whether the war ought to be continued, or on what conditions peace ought to be made."

In the provinces hardly anything else was thought of. Only in Paris did the candidates publish professions of faith. Opposite the bellicose proclamations of some were placarded lists frankly entitled *Peace lists*.[1]

Here then is the great debate opening before the country, which, so to say, covers all the rest: War or Peace! the political question takes a subordinate part. It is, however, connected with the former question by the fact that the chiefs of the Republican party had declared themselves firmly for war to the bitter end.

War to the bitter End

The Republicans thought that there was still an effort to be made; their opinion was that the fall of Paris did not compromise France. They reckoned upon the difficulty which the enemy would encounter in covering the whole of France with his troops; they were of opinion that Germany herself

[1] In certain departments the preparatory work was resumed which had been elaborated at the time of the convocation of the electors by the Government of National Defence. The elections were to have taken place on the 2nd of October, 1870; some lists of candidates had already been published, when the decree of the 24th of September intervened postponing the municipal and parliamentary elections *sine die*. See Louis Passy, *Le Marquis de Blosseville* (8vo. Evreux, 1898), p. 381. cf. Ad. France, *L'Assemblée nationale*, p. 7.

would have some difficulty in continuing for long an effort which, so to say, poured her out upon France. They called up reminiscences of the guerilla war; they counted upon a yet keener defence in the Morvan, on the central plateau, in Auvergne, in the strong places of the north; they wished to interest the south and west yet more in the struggle; they thought that the German statesmen, disturbed by the continuance of hostilities, not being unaware that they could with difficulty increase their demands, would themselves feel that they had an interest in peace; they also believed that Europe was on the point of stirring; in a word, they could not make up their minds to break with the famous precedents of the revolutionary periods. "War to the bitter end, resistance to the last stage of exhaustion," said one of the latest circulars addressed to the Prefects by Clement Laurier, Director-General of Officials; "the time of the armistice is going to be turned to profit to reinforce our three armies in men, munitions of war, and provisions. . . . The need of France is an Assembly which means war to the bitter end, and is decided to wage it."

This language of enthusiasm no longer produced an effect on the great mass of the country; so much must be admitted. France, to be able to act, must have hope, and she must be governed. Now, hope was no longer there, and authority was under discussion. Under the direction of the clergy, who had been untouched by the war, and of the municipal and district authorities, discontented at the dissolution of the General Councils declared in the month of December 1870, committees were formed very nearly everywhere, which drew up lists for the

combination of candidates on one single formula: peace.

The Partisans of Peace

Thus in a number of departments men were brought to choose from among the local notabilities men well known, pointed out by their age, their experience, their situation, their property, and also by their undisputed probity. The electors found themselves carried by the force of circumstances towards a class of men animated for the most part by moderate and liberal sentiments, but equally inclined by their past, their traditions, the very reserve to which they had hitherto restricted themselves, to the monarchical principle. They had not been asked for their colours: it was enough that they should show the white flag.

The country in fact had, so to say, no other available men.

The series of revolutions through which it had passed in the course of the century had divided it into four great rival parties, the Bonapartists, the Republicans, the Orleanists, the Legitimists.

The Bonapartist Party

We have only to take into consideration the plébiscite of the 8th of May 1870, to see that the party of the Empire was bound to be the most numerous in the electoral body. Its chiefs everywhere held in the country and in the country towns the greater number of the official positions: mayors, general and municipal councillors, notables. In the great towns alone they had disappeared since the 4th of September. However, the influential men remained in the country. They had been accustomed to lead universal suffrage at their pleasure. But precisely because they commanded in the name of power, they had the bent of obedience. The whole Imperial administration

having disappeared along with the dynasty, they were without compass and without guide. The responsibilities which weighed upon those who having taken part in the Legislative Body had voted for the war were too heavy and too recent. Bonapartism had acquired its following by assuring order, by developing material prosperity, by dazzling all eyes with the brilliant phantom of the ancient Imperial glories. Now all that had vanished in the twinkling of an eye. If sentiments of fidelity, of expectation and regret were hidden in any hearts, they did not venture forth. The Bonapartist party slunk away, so to speak, and it hardly appeared at the poll. Thus the troops of electors, numerous as they were, which it had formerly enlisted, found themselves in some sort handed over to their own devices.

The Republican Party

Bonapartism once dispersed, the Republican party had perhaps the most solid hold on opinion.

It was in possession of a hold on the State, which is always a strong force in a centralized country like France, and in which the professional and geographical groupings no longer existed anywhere.

The campaign of opposition to the Empire was justified now by the catastrophes to which the Empire had led the country. The greatest names in literature and philosophy gave their adhesion to the Republican party. Victor Hugo on his rock of exile had adopted the lofty physiognomy of a Dante: the "Châtiments" were on the lips of everybody:

Chastes buveuses de rosée,
Qui, pareilles à l'épousée,
Visitez le lys du coteau,
O sœurs des corolles vermeilles,

Filles de la lumière, abeilles,
Envolez vous de ce manteau !

The writings of Michelet, Edgar Quinet, and Henri Martin had penetrated into the schools of the Empire, and had prepared fresh and ardent recruits for the Republican ideal. Rochefort's pamphlets were secretly circulated, or formed a trade in contraband ideas from across the frontier. Among the chiefs of the Republican party, those who had more directly mixed in public life, Jules Favre, Jules Simon, Ernest Picard, had won a halo by ten years of strife. The activity displayed by M. Gambetta and M. de Freycinet in the Provinces made up a little for the loss of reputation from which the party suffered in consequence of the direction given to diplomatic and military affairs by the Government of the 4th of September. On the whole, the combination of these conditions already disposed a great part of the nation towards the Republican formula.

But these tendencies hardly ventured to declare themselves openly. The memories of the terror, the dread of a social upheaval, the still recent apprehensions which had been experienced in 1848 were appealed to by the partisans of monarchy. Furthermore, the Republican party was not organized in the country districts; in those parts it was hardly known to the electors, and they found themselves embarrassed by having to vote freely for the first time.

The antagonism which declared itself between the Government of Paris and the Bordeaux delegates on the question of the conditions of ineligibility threw a deep obscurity over the policy of the party.

Above all, the decided attitude taken by M. Gambetta and his friends in favour of war to the bitter end alienated many minds. The electors, without being opposed to the Republic, wanted peace; this consideration was paramount. It is, however, necessary to observe that no vote was anywhere given against the Republican ideal. Not a candidate protested against the Revolution of the 4th of September. The number of the Republicans reached about 200, as did that of each of the two other parties who contested the votes.

The Partisans of the Monarchy

Neither Legitimists nor Orleanists were called upon to express their opinions clearly. Around the country houses and bishops' sees the monarchical coalition brought to life again under the somewhat vague form of the Liberal Opposition, possessed a somewhat extensive electoral organization, which was already active under the Empire. Every thing that was opposed to the Imperial Government formed a combination of elements, which represented nearly everywhere wealth, influence, and respect. This organization was directed on the one side by the bureau of the Comte de Chambord, on the other by the chiefs of the Orleanist party.

Since the death of Louis Philippe, and above all since the death of the Duchess of Orleans, the two sections of the monarchical party had been a little less mutually antagonistic than they had been previously. They already discounted the fusion. Plenty of antagonisms and private grudges were still in existence. But there was a wish to believe that there was no longer any opposition in principle.

The Legitimist Party

Except in those districts of France in which it was confused with the clerical party, the party of the Legitimists had no longer any but a scanty hold upon the masses. Some illustrious or ancient families, who had retained great territorial positions or lived in honoured poverty, some members of the higher clergy, some respected chiefs at the head of the army, or gallant regimental officers, some writers, some magistates and men of the legal profession, alike prudent and pious, such was the roll of the Legitimist party. A misunderstanding of the conditions of modern life, often prepense, an upright but reserved manner of life, unsocial habits, a vague regret for all that had been, and an invincible determination to close the eyes against the present and the future, an avowed pessimism which was due to the habit of disillusion and defeat, such were the disposition and the sentiments which formed the strength and the weakness of the Legitimist party. It enjoyed more electoral successes than electoral action. The candidates of this shade of opinion were not considered party men; they received votes in virtue of their personal position, of the courage which numbers of them had displayed during the war, and of their declarations in favour of peace.

The Orleanist Party

The Orleanist party accounted for a number of electors perceptibly more considerable. The events of 1848 were not yet so far off that persons who had been attached to the Government of July had all disappeared or entirely broken with the past. The French middle classes had not forgotten the consideration which they had enjoyed under a reign which was their own handiwork and very image. Recalling the happy

times of the property suffrage, they did not easily accustom themselves to the sovereignty of universal suffrage and the disturbing vote of the horny-handed. With their customary prudence they refrained from advertising their sentiments; but they cherished them affectionately at the bottom of their hearts.

In private gatherings the merits of the princes of the House of Orleans were extolled; the learning and humanity of the Count of Paris, the gallantry of the Prince de Joinville and the Duc de Chartres; the prowess of "Robert Lefort" was proclaimed; above all was celebrated the high intellectual merit and military competence of the Duc d'Aumale. Essentially parliamentary and liberal, the Orleanists stood somewhat aside from the clergy; they allowed it to be understood that with them France would again discover an era of prosperity, remote from periods of crisis and adventure, along with the enjoyment of a wise liberty. Furthermore, many of them, and notably those who were particularly associated with the Duc d'Aumale, were not disinclined to rally under a conservative and moderate Republic; they spoke in whispers of the establishment of a kind of Stadtholdership.

On the whole the electoral situation was in confusion. No registers, no experience, no programme. Everywhere goodwill, prudence, an inclination to take into account the cruel lessons which had just been received, and two dominant notes: hatred of a dictatorship, and a keen desire for a speedy peace.

The religious Question

If we are willing to go to the bottom of things, we perceive that the real cleavage of the country was on the religious question.

The soul of France has always been preoccupied by this problem, not to say torn asunder. On the one side ancient faiths, a traditional solution of the problem of destiny, the submission of most families to the rites and customs of the Roman Catholic religion, glories accumulated during the centuries when France was "the soldier of Christ"; Saint Louis, Joan of Arc, Saint Vincent de Paul; the lesson left by the great masters of thought and language: Pascal, Bossuet, Chateaubriand; and lastly a kind of mystical impulse which in hours of sorrow folds the hands of women and children across the breast in the presence of that image of the Virgin Mother, in which are perhaps to be discovered some features of the Virgin of the Druids.

On the other side freethought, the doubt of Montaigne, Voltaire's laugh, the affirmative doctrine of Auguste Comte, the ideal of a humanity devoting itself to the definite work of realities, and re-establishing its morality and its ideas on the data of nature and progress; a profound conviction, spread above all in the intermediate classes, that the teaching of the Church is opposed to the development of civilization and science, that the "government of parsons" is to be feared, that the "Jesuit" and the "congregation" are on the watch over society, and always on the eve of a decisive triumph. Facing the clergy, which the nation continues to maintain and recognize by the vote of the public worship fund, a secret but powerful organization, that of freemasonry, very active, in full touch with the world, and devoting itself passionately to the problem of lay education.

On both sides sullen hatred, sectarian tendencies, a hand-to-hand fight even in the smallest township,

and even an irreconcilable spirit of aggression against those rare minds, which, raised above both parties, recognize that both alike represent forces, noble, useful, indispensable, convictions worthy of respect, and who, making an appeal to toleration, to the necessity of living in common and in mutual love, consecrate themselves, before all things, to the service of the fatherland, and recommend to all mutual kindness and patient endurance of life's problems.

These sentiments, ill-defined but yet deep, were in the minds of all at the moment when the country was consulted in those hours of sadness and sincerity in the presence of the enemy. They were all reflected together in the composition of the Assembly.

The decree of the 28th of January fixed the number of the deputies at 768.[1] The poll of the 8th of February sent only 630 representatives to Bordeaux in consequence of the plural elections of certain candidates. M. Thiers was elected in twenty-six Departments; General Trochu and M. Gambetta had the honours of nine elections; further MM. Jules Favre, Dufaure, Changarnier, Ernest Picard, Casimir-Périer, General d'Aurelle-de-Paladines, were nominated in several Departments.

At Marseilles MM. de Charette and Eugène Pelletan, General Trochu and M. Esquiros, M. Gambetta and M. Lanfrey found themselves in curious juxtaposition. Other Departments, such as Isère, sent to Bordeaux representatives of all the competing parties.

If the large towns gave their confidence as a rule

[1] In consequence of the treaty of Frankfort the number of the deputies was reduced from 768 to 738.

to the democratic veterans, the country districts followed the chiefs whose opinions were simply in favour of parliamentary government. The nobility which had taken up arms during the war was largely represented; it reckoned no less than two hundred deputies. One bishop, Mgr. Dupanloup, and two abbés, MM. Marhallac and Jaffré, represented the clergy. A member of a family allied to the Bonaparte family, Count Joachim Murat, was elected in the Department of Lot. Two members of the Orleans family, the Prince de Joinville and the Duc d'Aumale, were elected, the first in la Manche and la Haute-Marne, the second in the Department of the Oise.

From the point of view of the classification of parties the national assembly included: about two hundred Republicans, divided by halves into Moderates and Radicals; four hundred Conservative Monarchists, shared in nearly equal fractions between the Orleanists and Legitimists; lastly, some thirty Bonapartists.

Among the notable Republicans many were men of 1848 and 1849: MM. Étienne Arago, Arnaud (de l'Ariège), Louis Blanc, Hippolyte Carnot, Marc Dufraisse, Pascal Duprat, Ferrouillat, Gambon, Gent, Jules Grévy, Victor Hugo, Henri Martin, Ledru-Rollin, Joigneaux, Pierre Lefranc, Félix Pyat, Edgar Quinet, Rolland, Victor Schoelcher. Others had belonged to the Assemblies of the Second Republic and the Legislative Body of the Empire. MM. Esquiros, Emmanuel Arago, Jules Favre, Jules Simon. Some had directed the democratic opposition to the Legislative Body: Dorian, Jules Ferry, Léon Gambetta, Eugène Pelletan, Ernest Picard. Others had marked themselves out by the ardour of their Republican convictions, or by services rendered

to the Government of September: MM. Edmond Adam, Sadi-Carnot, Charles Floquet, Clémenceau, Lepère, Littré, Tolain, Alfred Naquet, Peyrat, Rochefort.

The Orleanist party, too, counted a certain number of members of former Assemblies: the Marquis de Gouvion Saint-Cyr, a former peer of France; MM. Bocher, General Changarnier, de Goulard, General Le Flô, the Marquis de Maleville, Martel, Mathieu-Bodet, Saint-Marc-Girardin, who had sat in the Parliaments of the Restoration or the Second Republic; Chesnelong, Daru, former members of the Legislative Body. This party further comprised: two representatives of the army, General Ducrot and Admiral Fourichon; a certain number of members of the "haute noblesse," the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, the Duc Albert de Broglie, the Marquis de Castellane, the Duc Decazes, Vicomte Othenin d'Haussonville; lastly, several men who were going to distinguish themselves by the importance or the novelty of their parts: MM. Batbie, Beulé, Depeyre, Ernoul, de Gavardie, Target. M. Buffet stood somewhat aloof.

Of the four parties which divided the National Assembly, the Legitimist party counted fewest striking personalities: some half-dozen members of former Assemblies, among whom were MM. Aubry, Comte Benoist d'Azy, Fresneau, the Baron de Larcy, the Vicomte de Meaux, the Marquis de Vogüé; in the background were men of great personal standing or high character: MM. de Cazenove de Pradine, the Marquis de Dampierre, Audren de Kerdrell, Lucien Brun, Baragnon. A leader was wanting to these distinguished men.

Among the Bonapartists were a few names evoking famous memories, or recalling distinguished merit:

MM. de Fourtou, Gavini, Comte Joachim Murat, Pouyer-Quertier.

Lastly, like all other Assemblies, that of 1871 included a certain number of individuals who oscillated from the Right to the Left, or perhaps imposed upon themselves the necessity of obeying the needs of the Government. These were the future Left Centre. Among its best known or most distinguished members figured: MM. Baze, Bethmont, Casimir-Périer, Deseilligny, Dufaure, Léopold Javal, Victor Lefranc, Léon de Maleville, Teisserene de Bort, Louis Vitet, Wallon, who had sat in previous Parliaments; Béranger, Féray, Lanfrey, Admiral Pothuau, Léon Say, the Comte de Tocqueville, Waddington, who exercised a real influence in the bosom of the Assembly or in the counsels of the Government.

"Vieilles barbes" of 1848, or "bonnets à poil" of fallen governments, most of the members of the Assembly were men of principle rather than men of business. There were certainly some men of great ability; there were even some who were to discover themselves during the labours of the Assembly; but these men had, for the most part, preconceived opinions, and little practical experience. Some of them knew what they wanted; but those who subordinated their actions to the course of events were still more numerous. Some eminent heads, many rare intellects, and, in the general mass, honest folk, such was this Assembly which the nation had chosen in its own image and sent to Bordeaux.

IV

The Assembly at Bordeaux

The Assembly had scarcely met when all eyes turned to M. Thiers, who seemed to be the necessary man. No other

name even occurred to the members of the Assembly.

Such furthermore appeared to be the opinion of the nation: twenty-six elections accumulating nearly two million votes on this one name had marked him out as the administrator of the misfortunes of the nation.[1]

Party spirit had remained apart from this manifestation of the popular will. M. Thiers had been elected on very varied lists, much more for his speeches against the war and his persevering efforts in favour of peace, than for his fame as an historian and liberal orator. At the end of an already long career he had on his side the force derived from having been too often in the right against everybody else for more than twenty years. In the phrase of M. de Meaux, " he was inevitable."

M. Thiers forms a complete contrast to Napoleon III. During the whole of the latter's reign he had been the incarnation of prudence, experience, and foresight, in opposition to the spirit of adventure, the taste for risk, and nebulous ideals. And this contrast is all the more striking because this little man was also, after his own fashion, an heir to the Napoleonic legend.

Of Southern origin, he had a trace of Greek blood, and he probably owed to those distant Mediterranean ancestors the brilliancy of his dominant quality, intelligence; he had a certain affinity with

[1] List of the Departments in which M. Thiers was elected on the 8th of February, 1871: Aude, Basses-Alpes, Bouches-du-Rhône, Charente Inférieure, Cher, Drôme, Dordogne, Doubs, Finistère, Gard, Gironde, Hérault, Ille-et-Vilaine, Landes, Loir-et-Cher, Loire, Loiret, Lot-et-Garonne, Nord, Orne, Pas-de-Calais, Saône-et-Loire, Seine, Seine-et-Oise, Seine Inférieure, Vienne.

the admirable and unfortunate André Chénier. His father was a merchant captain, describing himself as landed proprietor on suitable occasions,[1] who, along with other qualities, had not the taste for domesticity. Born at Marseilles, the South is radiant in him. He had studied at Aix with Mignet, who always remained attached to him, and who carried into the life of a man of letters and an historian a grave elegance, a discreet bearing, very different from the petulance of his brilliant friend.

Their studies finished, the two students had come to Paris. In a few years M. Thiers had insinuated himself, introduced himself, and made himself felt everywhere. Enrolled at the Bar, he spoke, he wrote, he carried on controversies, already exciting a great admiration and some surprise by his extensive knowledge, his inexhaustible inspiration, his strange freedom from ceremony, and his perpetual agility. His short stature, his spectacles made him physically somewhat quaint, but his imperturbable assurance and incontestable superiority checked the disposition to laugh.

At the age of thirty-two he had written a book powerful in its action. *The History of the French Revolution.* He had overturned a dynasty by adopting in the *National* that initiative which determined the departure of Charles X, and lastly he had created a new dynasty by being the first to propose the candidature of the Duke of Orleans, and removing the last scruples of this Prince, who hesitated to become King Louis Philippe.

[1] See Joseph d'Arcay, *Notes inédites sur M. Thiers*, Paris, Ollendorff, 1888, 16mo: the certificate of birth and legitimisation of Marie-Joseph-Louis-Adolphe Thiers, p. 5.

See also *Notes on the Family of M. Thiers* by Teissier, 1877.

He had attended on the last years of Talleyrand and his intelligence had unfolded itself to the dry lessons of the realist policy; but for a long time he was mastered by his imagination. Balzac called him the "*enfant terrible.*" During the whole reign of Louis Philippe he had been a cruel embarrassment to him; he would speak at the tribune of "the Crown and myself." The King loved him a little and feared him very much.

He was obliged to leave the Ministry after the terrible alarm of the "quadruple understanding," when in connexion with the Egyptian affair he had, by want of prevision and pliancy, restored the coalition of Europe against France. Exiled from power, flung into opposition, the implacable adversary of M. Guizot, he then lost contact with the middle classes without however committing himself to the revolutionary parties. He was considered as being in the way, and not to be depended upon. M. Guizot, who was his great opponent, crushed him with the weight of his solemn eloquence, his austere Protestantism, the royal favour, and the confidence of a submissive majority. In opposition M. Thiers spoke to no effect, and M. Guizot in power governed to no effect. These two men of the South, the grave Southerner, and the lively Southerner, opposed and cancelled one another. However Chateaubriand, writing his *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*, called M. Thiers "the heir of the future." In 1848 M. Guizot disappeared, and M. Thiers remained on the stage.

From 1848 to 1852 M. Thiers is still in the midst of his contradictions; his impetuosity, his vanity, and his imprudence contend in him against experience, good sense, clear-sightedness. He already pronounces

prophetic phrases, such as "The Empire is made"; but he commits serious errors, like the support given to the candidature of Prince Louis Napoleon at the very time when he had said that "Such an election would be a disgrace to France."

Incessantly repeating that "he belonged to the party of the Revolution," he remained in the general opinion the man of the *September Laws* and the *rue Transnonain*. A collaborator in the Napoleonic legend, he is anti-Bonapartist. Royalist by origin, he is already engaged in a flirtation with the Republic.

In 1855 he was writing: "As for the future, it belongs to the Republic. The People which has perfected all the arts and at the same time supplied the army of Sebastopol, that People has and will have to an increasing degree claims on a level with its merits. . . . The Government in its actual form is a stop-gap; but the future belongs, not to that liberty which can find its true condition of existence only in representative monarchy, but to democracy and the Republic. The bunglers of 1848 came to grief, and were bound to come to grief; but the same enterprise will one day be successful, when it shall issue not from a few clubs or a few public houses, but from the very bowels of the nation."[1]

In the words of a witty phrase which was uttered, "He would permit the Republic to be founded, provided that he was its President."

His restless activity turned afresh to the ideas current among the middle classes; he was gradually restored to favour with them. However, he still frequently confounded them by his freaks, his

[1] Baron A. de Courcel, *Notice sur M. Buffet.*

practices, his way of life, his somewhat affected and clumsy taste for certain elegancies which scarcely harmonize with the tribune and the cabinet.

The *Coup d'État* of 1852 did without him, was adverse to him, and set him aside. This time it seemed certain that his political career was ended; Mérimée writes in 1865 that he will not leave the path on which he has entered, "unless by a catastrophy." These are prophetic words; it might be said that M. Thiers heard them, and prepared himself.

During the eleven years that he lived in retirement, entirely given up to "his beloved studies," he finished his *History of the Consulate and Empire*, and saw himself styled by the Emperor "national historian." This vast inquiry which he thus pursued into the origins of modern France developed in him immense knowledge, renovated his judgments and his views, multiplied by mere force of study the authority which comes from the long practice of affairs, and the handling of men.

Starting from the moment at which he returned to the Chamber, nominated by the Department of the Seine in 1863, he conducted alongside of the Republican opposition, but not in combination with it, the campaign of criticism, advice, and prophecy which shook the Empire, and ought to have warned it. He is an orator clear, precise, well-informed, sometimes emotional. He has long rejected tumid forms and verbose developments. He is as much at ease on the tribune as in a private conversation, full of shrewdness, hits and sallies, behind his mischievous spectacles. He would speak for hours, and his audience would forget fatigue; he never felt it himself. By his clearness and the evidence

of his reasoning and information he overwhelmed a majority which hated him and did not wish to listen to him. He was always a siren, sometimes a Cassandra. All his phrases hit. He styled the Empire "a monarchy kneeling to the democracy." He uttered his famous speech on the "Indispensable Liberties"; he unmasked the audacious fiction of "the responsibility of the Emperor," who represses every responsibility in the government. He said unceasingly: "I represent the national instinct, common sense." In the end he was believed.

In the region of foreign policy his glance was often elevated, and pierced the future. He caught sight of what an English poet calls "the mighty shadow of coming events." He said that "the unity of Italy would be the mother of German unity." He opposed with all his might that expedition to Mexico which has been represented as "the great inspiration of the reign."

He persistently directed attention to Europe and the traditional policy, which a policy of prestige and show affected to neglect. On the eve of Sadowa, he announced in moving terms the events which were to follow and to bring misfortune upon France. He predicted the loss of Alsace Lorraine and the establishment of the Triple Alliance. "And then," said he on the 3rd of May, 1866, "we shall see a new German Empire created, that empire of Charles V, which was formerly housed at Vienna, which will now dwell at Berlin, which will be very close to our frontiers, which will press on them, restrict them; and, to complete the analogy, this empire of Charles V, instead of resting upon Spain, as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, will rest upon Italy."

When Sadowa was an accomplished fact he en-

joyed his triumph not without malice. "Beware," said he to the Empire, "beware; you have only one more fault to commit," and, pointing directly at that policy of nationalities, that policy of intervention, which had summed up the policy of the Empire, he added "Here we are sometimes Italians, sometimes Germans; we are never Frenchmen."

Consistent with himself, enlightened by the knowledge of military conditions, which had been brought to him by his study of the great Napoleonic wars, he withdrew from his friends of the Left and fought against that reduction of the contingent which was annually proposed by the Republican Opposition. His thoughts were always with the army. He wished France to be "ready."

She was not. He knew it, he lamented it. When the Hohenzollern candidature declared itself, and the hour of grave events was drawing near, when the crowds were shouting "To Berlin," M. Thiers made a further effort to stem the fatal stream; he implored the Chamber to postpone. He demanded the communication of the despatches, and insisted on not coming to a rupture "on a question of touchiness." In his own words, he "fulfilled the most painful duty of his life." This is clearness of vision aided by courage and carried to the degree of genius. But there is no love for the clear-sighted. The majority wished to impose silence on M. Thiers. He was called "the unpatriotic trumpet of disaster." They shouted at him, "Go to Coblentz!" The crowd streamed to his house in the Rue Saint-Georges and threatened to pour into it. Never was the antagonism between blindness and reason more violent.

Never did reason enjoy a swifter and more sorrowful revenge. Fifteen days later the series of

our calamities began. France was invaded, public opinion was benumbed; the Empire was breaking up.

The first thought that occurred to everybody was to have recourse to M. Thiers. The Empress Regent sent an old friend to him, an illustrious author, an intimate of the Imperial family, Mérimée, commissioned to offer him the Ministry. But it was already too late.

M. Thiers has himself told the story of this interview, which took place on the 3rd of September: "M. Mérimée was dying. He was the most gallant man in the world, one of the most intellectual and the best that I have known. He was devoted to the Empress, and used to give her wise advice.

"'You guess why I come?' he said to me.

"'Yes, I guess.'

"'You can render us a great service.'

"'No, I can render you no service.'

"'Yes, yes. I know your way of thinking; you are not interested in dynasties. Your thoughts are turned in the first place to the condition of affairs. Well! The Emperor is a prisoner; there remain only a woman and a child! What an opportunity for founding representative government!'

"'After Sedan there is nothing to be done, absolutely nothing.'"

Mérimée could take back no other answer.

This was the last meeting of the two friends. Mérimée died at Cannes a few days afterwards.[1]

M. Thiers had from that moment assumed that ascendency over the Legislative Body, hastily as-

[1] Enquête parlementaire sur les actes du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale; Déposition des témoins (p. 1 et suiv.); cf. Lettres inédites, de Prosper Mérimée, Paris, 1900, 8° (preface, p. cxiii).

sembled, which was assured to him by his age, his experience, and his only too well justified prevision.

In Paris the right-about-face was complete. "The crowd called us by our names," he declared before the Commission of inquiry of the 4th of September, and kept saying to me: "M. Thiers, get us out of this!"

He wished to forestall the revolution. An opponent of insurrection, and understanding the whole of the risk which attended on a Government born of "the fortunes of a day," he had sought to contrive a legal and parliamentary transition from a constitution which was breaking up to the constitution which France should bestow on herself. On the 27th of August the Assembly had unanimously appointed him to take part in the Committee of Defence created by the Government. But at the moment when his proposal to establish a provisional government, "in view of the vacancy in authority," was being discussed, the hall of session was invaded, and the same day the Government of National Defence was established at the Hôtel de Ville.

M. Thiers did not take a part in this Government, but he did not refuse his help. On returning from the mission which he filled in the different capitals of Europe, at London, at Vienna, at St. Petersburg, at Florence, he negotiated for an armistice, which came to nothing, and he withdrew to Tours and Bordeaux, waiting on events.

At the time when the Assembly meeting at Bordeaux proclaimed him "head of the Executive Power of the French Republic," M. Thiers was seventy-three years of age. But his health, his activity, his fire, were such that he could say to the

friends gathered round him: "The young men of to-day are still ourselves."

It is necessary to show him as he then appeared to the eyes of those Deputies arriving at Bordeaux from their provinces, for the most part ignorant of public life, confounded to the very depths of their souls by the magnitude of the tasks and responsibilities which weighed upon them, seeking in the awful darkness of the times a pilot, a guide, a light.

M. Thiers was all that. Fifty years of notoriety, twenty years of independent and firm polemical activity, and, above all, a full view of the realities in the last period of the drama, when everybody had been mistaken; such antecedents, such services, had carried his name even into the smallest township. His authority had no peer; his friends applied to him the words of Thucydides upon Pericles: "Thanks to the elevation of his character, the depth of his views, Pericles exercised an incontestable ascendency over Athens . . . Wherever he appeared, says one of his adversaries, he took without dispute the first place."[1]

In the awful hours when a stricken nation faces itself, faces its own errors, and the consequences of its errors, when it begins to doubt its destiny, it gladly entrusts itself to men who seem to have been prepared, by some higher providence, to seize the command and grasp the helm.

Certainly this century had seen some considerable men playing such a part in France during the periods of agitation which had followed on one another. Everybody had the name of Talleyrand on his lips. If M. Thiers did not show the lofty and

[1] Falloux, *Mémoires d'un Royaliste;* and the Vicomte de Meaux, *Souvenirs politiques.*

sovereign bearing, the cool and detached procedure which assured so great an authority to Prince Talleyrand in international affairs, nobody could fail to recognize in him a more contented competence, more activity, more disinterestedness, and more fire, if not more soul.

The question was not merely one of restoring a diplomatic situation, but of rebuilding a world. Now, in the universal dilapidation M. Thiers alone seemed fitted to breathe life into the ruins and to erect a shelter for future generations.

He could count on friends and devotion in all camps except the Bonapartist camp. He helped, and lent even himself, to all combinations. He encouraged all hopes, The Royalists thought that at heart he was with them, or, at least, would come back to them. The Republicans did not forget that he had long ago admitted the hypothesis of " crossing the Atlantic." He had discovered a happy formula in favour of the Republic : " It is the form of government which divides us the least." The soldiers gave him credit for the confidence and respect which he had always shown for the army; smile though they might with an air of comprehension, when his military competence was cried up, the great captains, beaten but yesterday, were embarrassed to find answers to the just observations " of this very deuce of a man " ; the administrators, the executives, all those who in times of crisis represent the framework of the country, those cautious men, always ready to obey, but always disposed to hold back, repeated his witty phrase on the officials in silk sleeves; they awaited orders from him, as from a man who has no dread of responsibility." " In truth, the whole of France, with its

courage, its common sense, its confident and brave character, its persistent gaiety rising above all its calamities, seemed to have taken refuge in the expansive bosom of this little Frenchman, who thought of everything, commanded everybody, and smiled at everything except the destinies of his country." [1]

There was no cavilling at details, at his scarcely mitigated defects, his vanity, his irritability, his sometimes alarming pliancy; all was forgiven.

Foreign powers reckoned with him; the ambassadors attended at his house, and telegraphed his words to their governments. His drawing-room was open to all. After the restorative after-dinner sleep he appeared fresh, smart, clothed in his maroon frock coat, the white crest-like tuft on the top of his head, his round eyes behind his spectacles, coming, going, gesticulating, talking alone, and multiplying repartees, strokes of brilliancy, good counsels, and, what was worth more, good reasons.

His conversation was stimulating and full of flavour. When he was on military subjects, he was inexhaustible. In the words of one who knew him well, "He interested more than he attracted."

He liked speaking in aphorisms; to those who reproached him with showing himself too much the hail-fellow to his adversaries, he said: "Reconaissances are only made in the enemy's country." Here is another stroke, related by an eye-witness: "The evening of the discussion on the bishops' petition, at the reception at the Presidency, an acid-tongued Orleanist was saying in a group that M. Thiers had tricked his former friends, and that, in spite of his protestations, he aspired to the dic-

[1] Hector Pessard, *Mes petits Papiers*, 1871–73.

tatorship. M. Thiers heard, drew near, and addressing the malcontent said to him: "My good friend, one day King Louis Philippe wanted to make me join a ministerial combination which did not suit me. I held my ground; the King insisted: 'You would like to make me believe," said Louis Philippe sarcastically, 'that you do not care for office?' I was a bit annoyed, and I replied to the King: 'Sir, on all the occasions when your Majesty has told me that you only accepted the burden of the crown in desperation, I have always believed you."

In these sallies, in the apparent improvisation, there was much calculation, and sometimes a certain affectation. People laughed, sometimes on the wrong side of their mouths, but they always gave way. Then explosions, sharp outbursts were hawked about surreptitiously, as were the deliberate peculiarities, the littlenesses of the small great man, his senile penuriousness, his fancies. One day a young chargé d'affaires is summoned to the Presidency to hear from the mouth of M. Thiers the instructions which he needs for a mission which he is to fulfil at Rome to Pius IX. The hour of audience is seven in the morning. After a moment's waiting the young diplomat is introduced; he expected a solemn interview; he finds the Head of the Executive coming from his matutinal visit to his stables, dressed in trousers with feet to them, a plaid, and wearing a round hat. M. Thiers remains standing, walks up and down, gets animated, excited, then quiets down, takes a seat, and at last dictates instructions full of wisdom, precision, and sagacity.[1]

Of all his whimsies, there was none which had a

[1] *Souvenirs de Carrière*, by Baron Des Michels.

stronger hold upon him than his desire to get his universal competence recognized by everybody. He said of an applicant who asked for the post of Director at the Sèvres manufactory :

" He is no more made for that post than I am for ——— " and then he stopped.

" Ah, ah ! Monsieur Thiers," said his interlocutor, " you find it very hard to say what you could not do."

" That's the truth, that's the truth," said he gaily.

And the author of this story recalls another anecdote on the same subject. M. Thiers was saying one day, in speaking of a man raised to a high function :

" He is no more suited for that office than I am to be a druggist ; and yet," he added, catching himself up, " I do know chemistry."

These details are not useless if they allow us to penetrate more deeply into that lively, brilliant, impulsive mind, which brought about the fortune and the fall of M. Thiers. He enjoyed that kind of energetic and sometimes aggressive superiority which is seldom forgiven. But mind and body alike were excellently tempered ; he was one of those blood-animals who can always be trusted to pull up to the collar. His clear intelligence dispersed radiance ; his words were sparkling rapiers. Light emanated from him. When he spoke, he drove into his hearers something of his own intense exuberant life. " This little tradesman with the fiery soul "—his own phrase, speaking of himself—deserved on the whole the remarkable commendation which was addressed to him, not without hesitation, by a friend who became an opponent : " You will have a great place in history, which will never have seen a swordless hero

changing the course of events by the mere royalty of his mind." [1]

The pliancy of his intellect was perhaps the most valuable quality of M. Thiers at the time when he came to power. Had he, to speak strictly, any convictions? The word is very cut and dried for that mind in a state of perpetual evolution. One day M. de Belcastel was pressing him, and asked him "what were his relations with God." "On that point," he replied, laughing, "we shall understand one another, for I am neither of the Court nor of the Opposition." He held the same attitude on many questions. His game between Republic and Monarchy recalls that which he played under Louis Philippe between the Crown and the country. He was the very antithesis of a party man. He has been reproached with it; it was said that he was of the party of M. Thiers: yes, but was not M. Thiers more often than not of the party of France?

France is the word which is always on his lips. He will think of nothing but the welfare of France. One necessity is more insistent than anything else: to appease, to reorganize. And yet, even to do good, a man needs a ticket, a name, a title, a flag. Here the tendency of M. Thiers shows itself: he is still faithful to himself when he repeats that he is on the side of the Revolution, on the side of liberty, and when he allows or causes the name of the Republic to be pronounced in his company.

To speak truly, M. Thiers was never a Republican. To speak generally, he had but a moderate faith in the magic of formulas. But he was not afraid of the Republic, and in that he is differentiated from the majority of the people among whom he lived.

[1] *Mémoires de Falloux*, t. ii. p. 529.

We have seen that, during the whole continuance of the Empire, he remained convinced that the Republic was the natural heir to Napoleon III. In the course of his diplomatic mission in Europe, speaking to Lord Granville on the 13th of September, 1870, of the form of government which suited France, he made the following declaration to him:

"The Republic is at the present moment everybody's government; bringing despair to no party, because it realizes nobody's wishes definitively, it now suits all." M. Thiers talked in the same strain at St. Petersburg. Speaking to Prince Gortschakoff he uttered these clear-sighted and prophetic words: "It is a Republic that is to-day the best of your friends (he is speaking of the United States), and perhaps there will soon be two included in your affections: at least, I wish it." "I should be very glad," replied the Prince.[1]

M. Thiers, then, on arriving at Bordeaux, was a Republican, if not on principle at least from reason. And he affirmed his sentiments without loss of time by demanding, to begin with, that to the decree, which nominated him Head of the Executive Power, should be added these words, "of the French Republic."

It was a downright decisive stroke. M. Thiers confirmed it by confiding the three principal portfolios in the constitution of his first cabinet to Republicans of the day before, men of the 4th of September: MM. Jules Simon, Jules Favre, Ernest Picard. In acting thus M. Thiers was evidently thinking of grouping all the active forces of the country together, and especially all those which could give him support against the hostility

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs de M. Thiers*, p. 18.

of the Bonapartists. He was also thinking of the future; and he announced his determination to make what he himself called "a loyal experiment" in Republican government.

M. Thiers, the eminent statesman, the minister of high experience, the former servant of royalty, the enlightened adversary of the Empire, the convinced Liberal, the ardent patriot, lastly, the man to whom an unanimous impulse confided the destinies of his country, M. Thiers, while still reserving his final decision, inclined to the Republic.

V.

Was M. Thiers, so far, in agreement with public opinion, and, above all, with the Assembly which had just entrusted him with power?

The Assembly had hardly met when, to begin with, it made a display of a very lively, and, in fact, excessive irritation against what it called "the dictatorship of M. Gambetta and especially of a deep indignation with reference to the Imperial dictatorship. It was mistrustful of Paris, which it accused of having prolonged the war to no purpose, of having misguided the country, and of having returned radical candidates.

These sentiments are chiefly *negative*. In obedience to them it accomplished its first political acts: the election of M. Jules Grévy to the presidential chair, and that of M. Thiers to the functions of Head of the Executive Power.

M. Jules Grévy President of the Assembly

In naming M. Jules Grévy president by 519 votes out of 536, the Assembly had shut its eyes to his well-known Republican opinions. It bowed to the wish, loftily indicated, of M. Thiers, who had designated

him for the votes of his colleagues. The son of a former volunteer of 1792, who reached the rank of chief of battalion, M. Jules Grévy had lived apart from politics under the Empire, but previously he had played a striking part under the Second Republic.

Although it was said he had figured in his youth among the insurgents who had seized the barracks of the Rue Babylon, he had addressed these words to his fellow countrymen of the Jura, among whom he was commissary of the Government of 1848, words which were recalled with satisfaction: "I do not wish the Republic to terrify."

Elected to the National Assembly of May 1848, he had been named its vice-president. During the electoral period for the Legislative Assembly he had uttered these words, which were an indication of prescience: "The danger no longer lies in insurrection, but in violent changes of Government." Precisely because he foresaw the advent of the Second Empire, he had brought forward in the course of the debates on the constitution the famous amendment suppressing the presidency of the Republic: "The National Assembly delegates the executive power to a citizen, who receives the title of President of the Council of Ministers."

At the time of the first plébiscite in 1851, M. Jules Grévy protested with great energy against the principle of this consultation of the nation: "In demanding an answer from the people," he said, "we give it an order."

Among the reasons which determined its choice, the National Assembly was peculiarly sensitive to the fact that M. Jules Grévy had been opposed to the establishment of the Government of September, and

that he had protested, not without vehemence, against the " dictatorship of Tours and Bordeaux." Lastly, in offering himself to the electors of the Jura he had declared himself for peace. But, once again, what influenced the vote of the Assembly, above all, was the desire expressed by M. Thiers. In any case at the outset the phrase, " M. Thiers wants it so," uttered in the lobbies at Bordeaux, or Versailles, was a word of command which brought opponents into line.

Installed in the presidential chair, Jules Grévy enthroned himself there with a curule majesty. He was dignity personified. His cool, impassive, and sagaciously impartial attitude broke the tradition confirmed by M. de Morny of presidents who enlivened the aridity of parliamentary debates with shrewd and sparkling sallies. Son of that Franche-Comté which in no more than one generation had given France Victor Hugo and Pasteur, he had the measured wisdom, the cunning shrewdness, the sense of conduct and the sense of consistency distinctive of that province. He admirably realized the ideal middle-class man. Naturally less quick and less impulsive than M. Thiers, prudent, self-controlled, and calm, speaking little and well, dropping from a slightly contemptuous mouth rare, well-minted axioms, without great views and without great passion, he was soon to be acceptable to everybody by his very prudence and reserve, and noiselessly to build the road for a very secret and very tenacious ambition.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

As in the course of this work I shall repeatedly have to find equivalents for the word " bureau " in connexion with the transactions of the French Assembly, and as the arrangements

of the House of Commons do not exactly correspond to those of the Chamber of Deputies, it seems to me that a preliminary note is necessary in order to avoid possible misconceptions. The passage in inverted commas has been kindly supplied to me by M. Hanotaux.

"We have first the "Bureau" of the Assembly. This is the official executive of the Assembly for the administration of its own business and the conduct of Debates. When the Assembly is not in Session, it is officially represented by its "Bureau."

The members of the "Bureau" are elected in a new Assembly after the validation of the Deputies, and then at the beginning of every year, until the Assembly is again dissolved. It consists of a President, four Vice-Presidents, eight Secretaries and three Questeurs. One of the Vice-Presidents takes the place of the President in his absence, holding for the time precisely the same powers.

Four of the Secretaries sit in turn on the Tribune with the President, and with him form the official staff of the Chamber while it is sitting. They keep the minutes of the proceedings, count and record the votes on divisions, receive notices of motions and projects of law from the hands of Deputies for the President. Thus they roughly correspond to the clerks of the House of Commons, but differ essentially from them in being members of the House.

The Questeurs are the financial executive of the Chamber itself; they are also responsible for the appointment of the minor officials and servants of the Chamber, and they draw up its private budget. The arrangement of the payments and allowances made to Deputies is also in their hands.

The Tribune is divided into two parts, like a "two-decker" pulpit. On the upper Tribune sits the President, with the Secretaries on duty; members who wish to address the Assembly mount the lower Tribune. When a document, such as a project of law, is said to be placed on the Tribune, the President's Tribune is meant.

The other sense of the word "Bureau" in connexion with the Assembly is rather more complicated.

"In 1871 the National Assembly, having adopted the regulations of the Legislative Assembly of 1849 for the order of its labours, divided itself into 15 'Bureaux,' which counted at first 51 members, then 49, after the treaty, which of Frankfort reduced the number of Deputies from 768 to 738.

"Every month the Deputies are divided among the 15

'Bureaux' by the method of drawing lots. Each of them includes a president, two vice-presidents, and one secretary. The 'Bureau' keep minutes of their private sittings.

"When the submission of a project of law to the 'Bureau' has been ordered by the Assembly for the nomination of an examining committee, the 'Bureaux' meet, and a general discussion takes place, after which each 'Bureau' elects one, two or three commissioners, according as the examining committee is to consist of fifteen, thirty, or forty-five members.

This Commission examines the project of law, discusses it, comes to conclusions upon amendments, and finally brings its report before the Assembly. The public discussion is opened upon this report.

"The composition of the 'Bureau' is changed every month, but not that of the Commissions. These remain at work till the final vote upon the project of law."

Thus, when the Assembly is said to be sitting "en bureaux," it is, roughly speaking, sitting in Committee; it is occupied with the preparatory, not the final stages of legislation; while the word "Committee" is again near enough to describe the status of the members of each "Bureau" elected to consider a "project of law," which again is near enough to a "bill" to be conveniently so designated.

The President and Secretaries on the Tribune represent a somewhat similar combination to that of the Chair and the Table, the Speaker and the Clerks, in the House of Commons.

The Assembly showed the measure of its political sentiments by the election of its other officials. Out of fourteen, two only, the president and one of the secretaries, M. Beltemont, were Republicans of any notoriety, the others belonged to the Orleanist party. The first vice-president. M. Martel, after having sat in the Assembly of 1849, had been a deputy in the Legislative Body from 1863 to 1870, and was one of the founders of the third party.

In the National Assembly he was to support the policy of M. Thiers. The second vice-president, Comte Benoist d'Azy, was the son of a former Minister of the Restoration. The oldest member of

the Assembly, he was of Legitimist opinions, and had sat in the parliament from 1841 to 1848, and in the Legislative Assembly in 1849, of which he had been elected vice-president. On the 2nd of December M. Benoist d'Azy had, in concert with M. Vitet, presided over the meeting in the hall of the tenth ward, in which the Representatives of the people who were hostile to the Coup d'État had taken refuge. M. Vitet, a member of the French Academy, was the third vice-president. He too was a parliamentary veteran; a deputy from 1834 to 1848, he voted with M. Guizot. A Representative in 1849, he sat with the Monarchists. On the 4th of September he gave his adherence to the Republic, to return later to his earlier convictions. M. Léon de Maleville, another vice-president, had also sat in the assemblies of the reign of Louis Philippe from 1834 to 1848. In 1870 he had been Under-Secretary of State for the Interior. A representative in 1848 and in 1849, he had been nominated by Louis Napoleon Minister of the Interior, but he only retained these functions for nine days. A friend of M. Thiers, he devoted himself from the first day to his person and his policy.

The National Assembly

We must now picture to ourselves this numerous and tumultuous Assembly, hailing from all corners of France, without past, without ties, without groups, composed in great measure of persons mutually unknown, curious to see and hear one another, anxious at the situation in which France was placed, and at the urgent solutions demanded by the situation.

Meeting in the exquisite setting afforded by the theatre at Bordeaux, and under the shadow, after a fashion, of one of the most glorious memories of

ancient France, the Assembly had to take without any delay the measures which were to decide the destiny of new France.

On the 17th of February, on the motion of MM. Dufaure, Jules Grévy, de Maleville, Rivet, de la Redorte, Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, M. Thiers was nominated Head of the Executive Power of the French Republic, but the Assembly, "knowing what it did not want better than what it did want," itself limited the authority which it created by giving it a temporary character. M. Thiers, in fact, was named Head of the Executive Power "until it is based upon the French Constitution"; such were the terms of the preamble of the decree of the 17th of February, 1871. The Assembly thus established not so much a provisional Republic as a government which, in the words of M. Thiers, was forbidden by the very terms of its constitution to consider itself definitive except by usurpation. To give the title of Republic to the French Government invariably provoked the murmurs of the majority to such an extent that the Head of the Executive Power could, with full justice, reproach the Assembly with not "daring to admit to itself the nature of the government which it had bestowed on itself."

It may be asked, Why, under these circumstances, the National Assembly did not proclaim the Monarchy from the outset? "The fact is," according to the words of a Royalist, M. de Meaux, "that at this moment nobody thought the thing possible . . . With a disunited royal house, with a monarch separated from his heirs, how," he adds, "could one think of setting up a monarchy?"[1]

[1] *Souvenirs politiques*, published by the Vicomte de Meaux

The most prudent or the most reserved hid their want of courage under plausible excuses. They dreaded, in anticipation for the government of their affections, the inevitable responsibilities: how could the descendant of Louis XIV be made sign the disruption of France, which was held to be inevitable, and how could the Restoration be given for a third time the escort of a foreign army? In truth it was impossible. The Royalists were apprehensive of a civil war; they had no wish to incur the resulting odium.[1] They also wished to spare their prince, when barely seated on the throne, the painful necessity of establishing fresh imposts and aggravating the military burdens. "Heaven preserve the prince from such a burden at such a time!" cried one of them. It would have been, as was further said, to wreathe the brow of the King with a "crown of thorns."

Thus there was a wish to leave to an anonymous Government, the Republic, the invidious task of liquidating the war. Upon the devotion or the ambition of M. Thiers was devolved this delicate operation, and when once the work of sweeping up was over, they would ask this same M. Thiers, appealing to his monarchical loyalty, to restore with his own hands on a clear space the throne on which the last heir of our kings was to be seated.

The Monarchical Party

The most prescient said among themselves that this was counting much upon a man and asking much of him, a man too who was known to be active, adroit, ambitious, and who must be credited with sufficient sagacity not to

in the *Correspondant*; the first article appeared in the issue of April 10, 1902.

[1] Falloux, vol. ii. p. 444, and Ch. Gavard, p. 30.

allow himself to be taken in by calculations which but ill concealed a trap. He was overwhelmed with caresses and promises, but also with lamentations and epigrams.

Meanwhile, he was too wise to discourage the Monarchists altogether, and he intentionally allowed them some hope for the future.

"What will you make of France the day after the peace?" the Comte de Falloux had asked him.

"I do not know what we shall do," replied M. Thiers. "But I am sure that with a ministry in which I shall have my old and dear friends, Falloux and Larcy, at my right hand, we shall get through all our difficulties.

"My terms will be the Monarchy," interposed M. de Falloux.

"Of course," replied M. Thiers. "We are at one upon that point; but time will be wanted, more time perhaps than you and I imagine to-day."

These words can evidently not be interpreted as a definite engagement, all the more because this conversation took place before the composition of the National Assembly was known. Even before the 4th of September M. Thiers was convinced that the restoration of the Monarchy could not be immediately realized.

"Understand me," he said to M. d'Haussonville on the 4th of September, 1870; "after all, I wish events to turn in favour of the Orleans princes, but not at present, not at once; we absolutely require for I don't know how long neutral territory."[1]

Neutral territory! This policy M. Thiers was soon to make the conquering policy; it has been called the "Bordeaux compact."

[1] *Unpublished Journal* of Comte B. d'Haussonville.

That M. Thiers did modify his views as to the issue of this provisional neutrality, to his personal profit, after the striking manifestation of the universal vote for his name, is possible, even probable. The check sustained by the fusion justified his perspicacity. However that may be, in obedience to his patriotism, his ambitions, and also, as M. de Meaux shrewdly remarks, to his love of work and his need of being occupied, he resisted for more than a year the assaults of three monarchical groups, playing them off one against the other. "There is only one throne," he said, "and there are three claimants for a seat on it." On this point he could not be answered.

The Orleanists always considered him as being, after all, the indispensable chief of their party; they watched him, and they spared him. As for the Legitimists, they could not forget the merciless determination with which he had put an end to the adventurous career of the Duchesse de Berry.

On the Left, too, mistrust or grudge against M. Thiers prevailed. The Socialists hated him frankly. They showed him no gratitude for his liberal attitude under the Empire. The Left, properly so called, always feared on his part a double-back upon Orleanism. Between him and M. Gambetta, who was on the whole the most conspicuous name of the Republican party, the gulf of incompatibility deepened, which had declared itself during the war, and was to proclaim itself by the two famous terms of abuse: "Raving lunatic"; "Ill-omened old man."

But lively as were these latent antagonisms, they still bowed to the needs of the moment, and before the formal wish of the Assembly to conclude peace at short terms. In the midst of its rising passions,

it recognized that M. Thiers, in the scarcity of men who were then at the disposal of France, was very nearly the only man capable of confronting Bismarck and facing the growing difficulties of the domestic situation.

Appreciating with one sagacious glance all these scattered elements, which by their contradictions still more than by their union, gave him his strength and rendered him indispensable, M. Thiers entered on his work of re-establishing the nation, and made known to the Assembly, in a message of the 19th of February, 1871, alike the Ministry that he had chosen and the programme which he intended to follow.

The Programme of M. Thiers

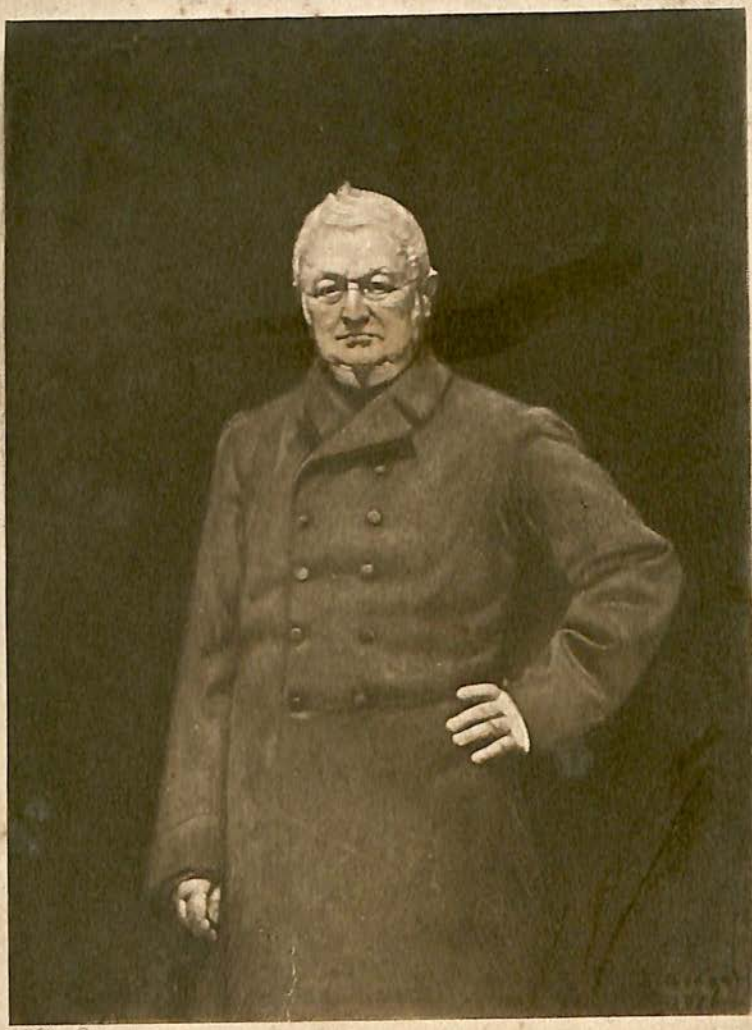
In the speech which he made on the 19th of February, he thus defined the situation of France at the hour when he received power:

> France, hurled into a war without a serious motive, without sufficient preparation, has seen half her territory invaded, her army destroyed, her fine organization shattered, her ancient and powerful unity compromised, her finances shaken, the greater part of her children torn from their labours to go and die on the battle-field; public order profoundly disturbed by a sudden apparition of anarchy, and, after the forced surrender of Paris, the war suspended for a few days only, ready to break out again, if a Government enjoying the esteem of Europe, courageously accepting power, assuming responsibility for painful negotiations, does not arise to put an end to terrible calamities!

In the presence of such a state of affairs, he asks himself, Are there, can there be, two policies? and, on the other hand, is there not only one—compulsory, necessary, urgent, which consists in putting an end as speedily as possible to the ills which overwhelm the country?

He replies immediately:

> No, no, gentlemen; to pacify, reorganize, restore credit,



Adolphe Thiers

from the picture by Léon Bonnat

revive work, that is the only possible and even imaginable policy at this moment. To this policy every sensible, honourable, enlightened man, whatever he may think with reference to the Monarchy or the Republic, can give his work usefully, worthily, and even if he may have worked at it only for a year, six months even, he will be able to return to the bosom of his country with his head high, and his conscience clear.

This work once accomplished, but only then, it will be possible to think of bestowing upon France a definite form of government.

Ah! doubtless, he continues, when we have rendered to our country the pressing services, which I have just enumerated, when we have raised from the ground on which she is lying that noble victim which is called France, when we have closed her wounds, revived her strength, we shall restore her to herself, and then re-established, having recovered the free use of her intelligence, she will herself tell us how she wishes to live.

When this work of restoration has been completed, and it cannot last very long, the time for discussing, for weighing theories of government will have come, and that will no longer be time stolen from the salvation of the country. Already a little removed from the sufferings of a revolution we shall have recovered our coolness; having marked out our re-establishment under the government of the Republic, we shall be able to pronounce upon our destinies with full knowledge, and the decision will be pronounced not by a minority, but by the majority of the citizens, that is to say, by nothing less than the will of the nation.

And M. Thiers concluded by addressing himself to the parties:

Be content then to remit to a term which, for that matter, cannot be very distant, the divergencies of principle, which have divided us, which will perhaps divide us again, but let us not return to them till the time when these divergencies, based, I am sure, on honest convictions, are no longer an act of treason against the existence and the salvation of our country.

Never has a more anxious assembly been addressed

in terms more true, more shrewd, and more wise. The Assembly applauded, for each party saw above all in these truths the part which applied to its adversaries; but all knew also that in order to choose between the parties, France, in the wretched plight in which she was, would proceed to take measure of capacity, devotion, and good intentions.

CHAPTER II

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AT BORDEAUX

The Constitutional Crisis—The Government of M. Thiers—It is recognized by the Foreign Powers—Cabinet of February 19, 1871—First Administrative Measures—The Negotiation of the Preliminaries of Peace; their Ratification—Versailles the Capital—Disposition of the Monarchical Parties—The Comte de Chambord—The First Steps in View of Fusion—The Princes of Orleans elected Deputies—The Understanding of Biarritz—The Bordeaux Compact.

I

FOUR times in the course of the century the law of heredity had failed in France. No single dynasty, ancient or new, had been able to clear in the normal fashion one single step in legitimate succession

Places of exile had been cumbered with pretenders to the crown of France; the Count of Provence, the Duke of Reichstadt, Charles X, the Count of Chambord, Louis Philippe, the Count of Paris, Napoleon III, his son the Prince Imperial, not to reckon veiled or impotent candidates, junior branches, etc.

Heredity promises stability before all things. Now stability decidedly left Monarchy in the lurch in France. As for the very principle of hereditary

sovereignty, it was tainted and violated by the succession of rival dynasties hustling one another. The right divine, such as it had been unfolded by Bossuet, that intervention of Providence which proceeds to mark the future master of peoples from his mother's womb, that bold and ingenious fiction, that kind of cast of the dice, in which the dice are cogged by faith in monarchy: the right divine was checked by heredity itself.

Bossuet had said in his magnificent style: "Nothing is more durable than a State which endures and is perpetuated by the same causes which ensure the duration of the universe and mankind . . . No plots, no cabals in a State to secure the throne; nature appoints the king; the dead man, let us say, invests the living, and the king never dies!"

But the century had spent itself in giving the lie to Bossuet's assertions. The kings had gone off one after another. The crowns had broken to bits of themselves, and the terrible gibe of La Bruyère might have been repeated: "The royal dignity has no longer any privileges. The kings themselves have abandoned them."

The Sovereignty of the People

For the right of kings had been substituted the sovereignty of the people. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, picking up again the views of the theorists of the sixteenth century, had dictated the new political code. But if the principle was admitted, its application presented great difficulties. To begin with, the sovereignty of the people imposes the law of majorities, there is no other way out. Now, it is not sufficient for an expedient to be necessary to ensure its being without effect. The law of majorities can

become the most grinding of tyrannies. Ought the right of suffrage to be restricted or limited to certain classes of the population? By what process are we to include some citizens, exclude others? What share are we to assign to interests, wealth birth, age, sex? What will be the fate of minorities? A still more delicate question: is the people to govern directly or rather by delegates, by representatives? Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the father of the system, had declared himself with energy against any form of representation whatever: "Sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason that it cannot be alienated; it consists essentially in the general will, and will is not capable of representation; it is the same or it is something else; there is no middle term. . . . The English people believes itself to be free; it is very much mistaken, it is only free during the election of Members of Parliament: as soon as they are elected it is a slave, it is nothing . . ."

The Plébiscite

Skilful logic had deduced from this reasoning the doctrine of the plébiscite. It was then the people which directly designated the agent of its power *ad nutum*. The latter was no longer anything more than an instrument of action which the people could cashier at any moment. But then we fall into another danger. The will of the people is a stupendous will; by the mere fact of designating some one it confers a kind of dictatorship. The theory of the plébiscite had been thoroughly searched out under the Second Empire. M. Gambetta, in his famous speech on the 5th of April, 1870, had, so to say, heaped up the whole stock of the opposition arguments. Certainly he had not denied the right

of the people. He had recognized the force of the plébiscite. But in confining himself to the strict meaning of the expression *plebis scitum* (what the people knows), he had required that the people should know what it did, that it should be thoroughly informed. Now, one can always allege the ignorance and insufficient information of a crowd; the appeal to the people "in a state of better information" is always open. So we have for our social order a perpetual menace of revolution. What party would fail to repeat the decisive phrase of the tribune in that discourse which was the prelude to so many famous harangues: "We wish to resume the inalienable right of the nation for ourselves and our successors, to work out the plébiscite directly and independently; we demand it, and so long as this restitution has not been effected, the plébiscite is nothing but a snare and a delusion."

Furthermore, the two disastrous consequences of the plébiscite of 1870 had put the nation itself out of conceit with this form of political procedure for a long time. M. Gambetta, in this same speech, had already placed himself in contradiction to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, since he had said: "There is a power which is above all: it is the collective power of the country *represented by its deputies!*" The new evolution was evidently being accomplished in the direction of representation.

The catastrophe of 1870 had made an irresistible stream of this latent evolution. Nobody except Gambetta, who, in an admirable letter written to Jules Favre on the 27th of January, 1871, propounded the question in these three terms: 1st, the plébiscite; 2nd, an elected chamber; 3rd, the continuation

pure and simple of the Government of National Defence, had even had the idea of recurring to any other procedure than the assembling of a deliberative body. Furthermore, there were glorious traditions in this direction. The Revolution, mother and mistress of modern rights, had confided the task of founding the new order to an Assembly.

But the system of an Assembly once adopted, one last question declared itself. Had the Assembly which had been nominated by the country to decide the question of peace or war the qualifications to give France a government? The question was at least doubtful. M. Thiers shirked it, in some sort, when in the famous sitting of the 1st of March he replied, on being interpellated by the Bonapartist députies, who invoked the authority of the four Imperial plébiscites against the Assembly: "As to the national rights, you say that we are not a constituent Assembly. But there is one fact which admits of no question, viz. that we are sovereign." Granted: but can a mandate given in a time of tumult be transformed at the pleasure of the mandatories into a constitutional mandate?

It must not be imagined that these difficulties were absent from the minds of the men who met at Bordeaux. Most of them were jurisconsults accustomed to argue out the principles of right and to seek the rational cause.

Royalists of every shade incessantly turned all the monarchical systems inside out; the right divine pure and simple, the pontifical consecration, the popular sanction, and even the authority of insurgents and the barricades. The Republicans were no less divided, and very different opinions would have been found among them from

the sectaries of Jacobinism to the hatchers of stadtholders.

If the parliamentarians were the most numerous in both camps, the irreconcilables of the Right and Left were the most ardent and perhaps the most illustrious. All systems were in collision, and, if there had been leisure, there would have been discussions on the theory of power, and the foundations of sovereignty to all eternity. Neither competence nor authority would have been wanting. This Assembly, issuing from the bosom of the country after a century of constitutional crises, was a very nest of Lycurguses.

But see the force of events: the need of living silenced theories, if not convictions, and bade a truce to arguments. The National Assembly had appointed M. Thiers and given him the title of "Head of the Executive Power of the French Republic." Now, in virtue of this one fact, the simple fact that it was in existence, the Assembly gave a lawful government to the country; it erected the parliamentary government, and it founded, at least provisionally, the Republic.

The provisional Republic

The full import of this vote is indicated in the report presented by M. Victor Lefranc on the proposal of MM. Dufaure and Jules Grévy: "This explanation (of the true meaning of the proposal) is nothing else than the incontestable affirmation of the sovereign right of the nation and the Assembly, by which it is represented, to deal with the institutions of France, parallel with the affirmation of a no less incontestable fact: the existence of the Government of the French Republic.

Thus the Assembly declared itself sovereign, and

was fully aware that it was giving France a constitution in the embryo, on the 19th of February. Another revelation springs immediately from the first decision of the Assembly, viz., the nation's instinctive mistrust of the system of committees.

Nobody, no existing organization, limits the action of the Assembly; it is the absolute mistress of power: then what does it do? It hastens to despoil itself of its own, in some sort, dictatorial authority. It admits no inspiration, either from the precedent of the long Parliament in England, nor from the more recent precedent of the Convention. This Assembly dreads the tyranny of Assemblies. Instead of retaining power and exercising it directly through its committees, it immediately delegates it to one man, and entrusts him with that enormous authority which is called the executive power; and this it does not even define.

M. Thiers Head of the Executive Power

It is quite true that the Assembly considered this delegation essentially revocable; it created a power outside itself, but it simultaneously declared that M. Thiers exercised his functions "under the authority of the Assembly." Furthermore, it reserved a future for its own tergiversations by the preamble which preceded the decree, and by the actual text which gave the Head of the Executive Power a mandate capable of being at any time withdrawn.

Here another dread, another mistrust is revealed; viz., of a dictatorship; it amounts to a passion, a quest for instability. The powers of M. Thiers were provisional and without a fixed term. This explains the fact that, contrary to all precedents, he retained his seat as a representative, and this situation was to last. So M. Thiers, citizen, deputy,

president, negotiator, enjoying all powers and the powers of a plenipotentiary, was everything and nothing, since any fine day a caprice of the Assembly could consign him to obscurity. Just this drove the little man wild. He believed himself to be made of the stuff that dictators are made of, or, at any rate, of the stuff of a party leader, of the chief of a majority and a government.

Now, all parties treated him like a suspect; properly speaking he had no majority. Everybody counted on him, but everybody chaffered with him. The bait of power was for ever dangled in front of him, and always withdrawn. Tossed between his ambitions, his pride, his patriotism and his activity, he was in a terrible difficulty: assuredly the only man of that day who was worthy of so great an honour, and capable of dealing with so difficult a situation.

As for the existence of the Republic, the second postulate of the Assembly, it was, as the report of M. Victor Lefranc states, incontestable. It had been the lawful Government of the country since the 4th of September. Had not treaties been signed, justice administered, promotions made in the army, the business of administration carried on, in the name of the Republic?

Here again facts were stronger than inclinations. There was an imminent peril. The "res publica" was in question. The "Republic" only, so to speak, indicated the real state of affairs by its name. In former days, when analogous circumstances had been brought about in France, whether in the time of Joan of Arc or of Henry IV, the universal anxiety had been the fate of the "realm of France." Now "France" was the object of concern, that is

to say, a community of persons and interests existing outside the form of government. Current language qualified the new system which was defined by the title given to the Chief of the State: the Republic.

The pressing need of the moment was a government which could treat with the enemy. The armistice was on the point of expiration. It was indispensable either to conclude peace, or to prepare to continue the war. Barely forty-eight hours remained to the Government, whatever its character, for negotiation with Germany. How at such a moment broach long discussions on constitutional law? The Republic was in the first hour the daughter of realities and necessity.

But note further the force of a word. By the simple fact that it received a name, the Government assumed a form. With the same stroke a remedy was applied to the anarchy which threatened the whole country when the war was barely over. In fact the rule of the Empire in its fall on the 4th of September had dislocated the whole administration, and the Government of National Defence had not created a political mechanism. The army? Destroyed or in captivity. The home administration? Disorganized by the conflict at Bordeaux between the Delegation and the central power. The magistracy? Its permanency had been impaired by the measures taken against the members of the former mixed commissions. The Departmental and Communal Assemblies? Dissolved and not restored.

France then was reduced to a destitution of any internal outfit except that which was provided by the state of war. If this last support failed her,

everything would collapse. The enemy himself had the most pressing interest in seeing a government constituted, whatever its nature. Bismarck had too profound a sentiment for reality not to understand that it is impossible to treat with a vacuum. He was only too glad to find some one with whom to parley. The name of M. Thiers was a guarantee for the present. The title of the Republic was a promise of future duration. Germany had then no reason for refusing to recognize the new Government, and for not entering into negotiations with it. Furthermore, the armistice imposed an obligation.

The Powers recognize the new Government

As for the other Powers, they had no valid reason for delaying their adhesion. Bismarck might perhaps have wished it. In a despatch dated the 15th of May, 1871, M. de Gabriac, the French Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg, writes: "Prussia would not have been displeased if Russia had procrastinated with us as she had already done on other occasions. The result would have been a real source of weakness to us, and, a month later, a serious embarrassment in the face of the insurrection of Paris. She would have had more elbow room in dealing with us by proving before the eyes of Europe that we were beaten at home, and not accepted abroad." But it was in the interest of the Powers themselves to outwit this manoeuvre. In Europe no people was capable of desiring the complete annihilation of France: for that would have involved the immediate erection of the German Supremacy.

Already, in the early days of February, M. de Chaudordy, Commissioner of Foreign Affairs at Bordeaux, had prepared the recognition of the

new Government. On the very day of his election M. Thiers received Lord Lyons, Prince Metternich, and Commandant Nigra, who immediately notified to him the official recognition of the French Government by Great Britain, Austria, and Italy. On the 21st of February Russia followed suit. Without pledging themselves for the future the Cabinets of Vienna and St. Petersburg accepted the Government such as it was constituted by the election of M. Thiers. Germany was to act in the same way after the definitive conclusion of peace. The other countries rapidly followed these examples. M. Thiers then had to negotiate peace not as a simple plenipotentiary, but as chief of the lawful and regular Government of France.

II

Negotiation of Peace

Unhappily, the conditions under which these negotiations opened were terrible for France and her representative. M. Thiers, in fact, thought it was his duty to assume simultaneously the double responsibility for the Government and the negotiations. This is a dangerous method, since it leaves no reserve to meet improvisations and discussion. But the circumstances were such that speed of action was alone thought of. While Gambetta and some able or vigorous generals maintained that France was able and ought to struggle on, the opinion that after the capitulation of Paris peace was inevitable kept gaining ground.

Meanwhile the National Assembly, with a just sense of its duty, had opened an inquiry on the proposal of M. Dufaure as to the conditions under which the struggle would be continued

The Means of continuing the War

What then was the military situation? With what forces would the campaign have been resumed? The disasters of the beginning of the war had deprived France of nearly all her best officers and lieutenant officers. No single one of the former regiments of the line any longer existed. Musters made on the 3rd of February showed an effective of 534,432 men for the twelve army corps of which our army was then composed. To these might have been added the class created in 1870 of which the contingent amounted to 132,000 men; but the Minister of War declared that he was not in a position to arm, clothe and train this force if the date of calling out were anticipated. Furthermore, the army had been enfeebled by an epidemic of small-pox. There were reckoned in the hospitals or the ambulances more than 73,000 men sick or wounded.

On the other hand, of the effectives present with the corps it is estimated that only 205,000 infantry belonging to the marching and mobile regiments were in a state to receive the shock of the enemy. "Nearly all the rest," says General de Chabaud-Latour, in his report to the National Assembly, "is an embarrassment, a source of disorder, and will not be able to furnish soldiers worthy of the name before several months." Let us add to this figure 14,474 seamen, the remainder of a body of 55,000 combatants.

The cavalry reckoned 20,000 men, and the artillery 33,931; the horses of these troops had suffered seriously from the hard weather and short forage. The remount services could procure from 10,000 to 12,000 horses in six weeks.

If we pass to the armament of these troops the

situation was scarcely more brilliant. The artillery counted 1,232 pieces provided with 301,732 rounds, say 244 rounds per piece. The total formed 207 regular batteries with 17 reserves of division and 8 parks; in all, 4,000 movable pieces. The arsenals possessed further 22 batteries of 4, 8, and 12, provided with 227,492 rounds; but the necessary horses and men were wanting. There were further reckoned 443 guns of 4, 7, 8 and 12, and 398,000 projectiles; but for these arms there were neither carriages, nor caissons, nor cartridges. Lastly, 1,524 field-pieces were in course of fabrication. There had been purchased abroad 25 Whitworth batteries and 300 Parrot guns; this artillery was of bad quality, and it was difficult to keep it supplied with projectiles. According to established estimates the workshops of the war department, the navy, and private firms would have been able to furnish, one month after the resumption of hostilities, the whole material necessary for 100 batteries. The capabilities of private firms amounted to 11,000 projectiles a day.

The supply of powder for guns and rifles, amounting to only 4,714,880 kilos., was inadequate. In order to continue the war, it would have been necessary to have recourse to foreign supplies, a course which involved serious inconvenience, foreign powders being defective in use.

The arsenals reckoned 436,052 breech-loading rifles of various patterns, of which 287,417 were chassepots, also 362,067 muzzle-loaders. Further, the Home Office possessed in its depôts 128,668 rifles, and had distributed 498,000 to the stationary national guards. The workshops of the War Office were making 25,000 chassepots a month, and 24,000

breech-loading rifles had been ordered abroad, to be delivered at the rate of one-third at the end of each of the months of March, April and May.

In addition to the 90 cartridges per man which had been served out, there was reckoned a supply of 183,048,000. There were being made 2,000,000 a day, and 104,882,000 were expected from England and America.

The Navy

The war had left the navy almost untouched. It offered an available force of about 65,000 men, including 15,000 riflemen on duty in the armies. The fleet comprised 208 craft ready for service at once, to wit: 15 frigates, 7 corvettes, and 14 guardships or floating batteries, all these were armoured; 6 screw ships or frigates, 10 screw corvettes or frigates, 39 screw despatch boats or frigates, 40 gun boats, 29 screw transports or frigates, 6 paddle frigates or corvettes, 20 sailing despatch boats and 9 transports, 5 schooners, 8 lighters, none of these armoured. This fleet was armed with artillery formidable in number and above all in weight; the 208 vessels carried no less than 526 guns, each supplied with 100 rounds. Lastly, the harbours had 78,240,807 kilos. of coal in magazine; at Algiers, in Corsica, in the colonies, and naval stations, the supply was 64,634,410 kilos., which gave a total of 142,875,217 kilos. of fuel, an amply sufficient quantity, considering the small relative importance of naval operations.

Financial Resources

After soldiers and arms, money. With what resources would the war have been continued? Financial means had nearly run dry. The expenses pledged on behalf of the State and partly paid at the beginning of February, over and above the credits opened in the ordinary and ex-

traordinary budgets of 1870 and 1871, amounted to the total of 2,300,000,000 francs. To this sum must be added through failure to recover money due or loss in the collection of the direct and indirect taxes of 1870 and during the first two months of 1871, about 400,000,000, say in all, 2,700,000,000.

In respect of these expenses only 1,573,000,000 had been anticipated from extraordinary resources, which for the rest were completely exhausted. Between receipts and expenditure there was then a considerable margin, which was to be still further increased by loss and charges certain to change the balance of the preceding budgets into a deficit.

No further income could be expected than what was to be derived from payments in arrear, or not yet fallen due of the loan of 750,000,000, now 385,000,000, and the balance of 20,000,000 to be received on the London loan.

If the credit of France was unimpaired, it was, none the less, very difficult to contract and realize a loan either at home or abroad.

Every calculation being made, if the war continued, there would be an excess of expenditure over receipts amounting to at least 8,000,000 francs a day or 240,000,000 a month. To give an idea of the financial exhaustion of the country, and the state of the public mind, it was seriously reported in the lobbies of the Assembly at Bordeaux that M. Pouyer-Quertier, when he was appointed Minister of Finance, carried away the whole of the public Treasury in his hat![1]

The Occupation of Territory

It is also necessary to include in the account the effects of the sudden penetration of the German armies into our terri-

[1] Ch. de Mazade, *Monsieur Thiers*, p. 369.

tories in the event of a rupture of the armistice. The victorious enemy already occupied a third of France. Ten million Frenchmen were living under the Prussian administration, twenty-seven Departments composed the four Governments, whose seat was established at Strasburg, at Nancy, at Rheims, and at Versailles; and other Departments were administratively neutralized. Prussian prefects and sub-prefects already managed the country under occupation. To face them only the municipalities faithful to their duty remained.

In the districts occupied by the enemy there could be no question of proceeding to fresh enlistments. The men already called to the colours had been prevented from joining their corps under penalty of terrific reprisals upon their families. Thus the soldiers were in a fashion prisoners before having fought.

From the financial point of view, how could the participation of the invaded communes be reckoned on? Did they not pay contributions of war to the amount of 708,816,693 francs 36 centimes? without counting the 200 millions of the ransom of Paris. To this charge must be added 27,333,757 francs, arising from the losses caused by the cattle plague, which at that time attacked 93,836 animals.

Economical Situation of the Country

Already in existence in a latent condition, the industrial crisis broke out with exceptional gravity during the last months of the war. There was a glut of productions; soon markets failed in consequence of the monopolization of the railways for military transport; the factories were disorganized by the mobilization. The Creusot firm passed on to foreigners orders which it was unable to meet.

At Roubaix 40,000 artizans were upon the relief lists; at Tourcoing 15,000 were destitute; at Rouen 41,000 were fed by public charity; at Rheims 15,000 were on the streets.

Trade had suffered no less than manufacture. It had been hampered by the want of credit and the poverty of the markets. The banks had closed their safes which they had no longer the means of filling. Several refused to return deposits. The Bank of Rheims had several millions of assets which had never been presented for collection. Everywhere the currency was short except in the north, where it was procured from Belgium at a premium of three to five francs per thousand. In the greater number of the large towns there had been an issue of divisional and local paper money, guaranteed either on municipal security or on that of manufacturers by means of deposits of goods. But business transactions, there being no longer any common standard, had become very difficult everywhere.

The country districts passed painfully through the winter, and saw the new season coming on with anxiety.

The strong arms were wanting. The autumn sowings had not been made. All scourges had conspired at once against the peasants. The supplies of provisions, etc., were nearly exhausted, and the Departments which had escaped were precisely those of the south, less rich in cereals and cattle. Lastly the severity of the winter added its menaces to all those which crowded the horizon.

First administrative Measures

While this rapid inquiry into the situation of France was going on, M. Thiers proceeded to a fresh organization of autho-

rity. For the purposes of the definitive negotiations which were going to be opened with the enemy he could not present himself except with a constituted Government. He was convinced that his first duty was to unite around him as soon as possible all the forces of the country. In his first speech he proclaimed a truce to parties. Without hesitating, his daring mind attacked the enterprise of a national reconciliation, already attempted in vain by Lamartine in 1848.

He hoped that France, shaken by her terrible disasters, would forget the hatreds and prejudices by which she was divided. He would gladly repeat the phrase of Duplessis-Mornay in the middle of the disorders of the Ligue: "Let there be no longer any question between us of Papists or Huguenots, but only of Spaniards and Frenchmen." He would wish the sons of one and the same country, so loving a country, so cruelly smitten, to learn at least to endure one another.

Ministry of the 19th of February

He obeyed this thought in constituting the Ministry of the 19th of February. Men of all opinions were grouped together in it. The homogeneity of the Cabinet depended upon this fact, that each of its members felt the necessity of carrying out the policy of the Head of the State. The National Assembly accepted it without enthusiasm. It was known that M. Thiers was the soul of it, and that nothing important could be done except by him.

The Chief defined it as follows: "I have taken the Ministers," he said, "not from one of the parties which divide us, but from all, as the country itself has done in voting for you, and in causing the appearance often on the same list of the most

diverse personalities, utterly opposed as far as we can see, but united by patriotism, enlightenment, and a common fund of good intentions.[1]

The majority of the members of this Cabinet belonged to the Right Centre and to the Left; the Legitimists had obtained only one portfolio, that of M. de Larcy, a former member of the Liberal Union in the Legislative Body; he was further chosen because of his burning animosity against the Empire. Very attentive to the movements of the Assembly, M. Thiers had taken stock of the double current which was revealed, whether against the Imperial system, or the former Delegation of Bordeaux. Three out of five former members of the Government of National Defence, whom he retained in power, belonged to the fraction that had fought against M. Gambetta.

M. Thiers had reserved only three out of nine portfolios for Republicans; but in giving them Foreign Affairs and the Home Office, he rightly thought that he bestowed on them the most important position in the Cabinet.

MM. Jules Favre, Jules Simon, and General Le Flô kept their offices.

M. Jules Favre

The figure of M. Jules Favre will become an enigma as soon as the generations disappear who heard that eminent orator. His art exercised such a fascination that the judgments of his contemporaries upon him were not free. Eloquence enthralled them with its golden chains. Those who never felt the seduction are amazed that a man of what appears to be ordinary intelligence, of a feeble character, and an empty soul, was able to usurp such an influence under such

[1] Speech to the National Assembly, Feb. 19, 1871.

tragic circumstances. M. Jules Favre, always elevated, often declamatory, having inherited the art of moving rhetoric from romanticism, too much absorbed by the law courts to have any real knowledge of public affairs, was also as ill-prepared as it was possible to be for the part of Minister of Foreign Affairs. And he was the man who was pitted against Bismarck! The contrast is really too severe. But M. Thiers was of opinion that the former Vice-president of the Government of the 4th of September, the negotiator of the agreement of the armistice, ought also to negotiate the future treaty of peace. As for the Right, always ready to slip out of a mess, "it seemed just"—these are the words of M. de Meaux—"that the treaty which was going to despoil us should be signed by the author of that imprudent and resounding formula: *Not an inch of our territory, not a stone of our fortresses.*"

M. Jules Simon

In the case of M. Jules Simon, over and above the undisputed competence which he brought to the direction of the Ministry of Public Instruction, his presence in the Cabinet appeared to be indispensable. Was it not he who had secured the victory for the Government of Paris in its recent conflict with the Delegation of Bordeaux? Had he not in the same measure shown himself a resolute adversary of the Empire? A representative in 1848 and 1849 he was Professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne at the time of the 2nd of December. He re-opened his course on the 9th of December, on the eve of the Plébiscite, with this famous manifesto: "Gentlemen," said he, "I am professor of morality here. I owe you a lesson and an example. Right has just been publicly violated. Should

there be only one vote in the urns to pronounce condemnation, I claim it in advance; it will be mine." From the end of the war M. Jules Simon had attached himself to the person of M. Thiers. His "liberalism," as well known as it was, skilfully endeavoured to repair the errors of the somewhat imprudent "radicalism" which he had put forward under the Empire. The Right was nervous at seeing the nomination of the bishops in the hands of the philosopher. But his elusive pliancy disturbed Mgr. Dupanloup still more than his views: "He will be a cardinal before I shall," said the latter, laughing.

General Le Flô

As for General Le Flô, the services which he had rendered during the war justified his retention in power. A former representative in 1848 and 1849 he had been along with M. Baze a questeur of the National Assembly and, in virtue of this, one of the most conspicuous opponents of the Prince-President. At the beginning of the war, less fortunate than Changarnier, he had demanded his restoration to the active list of the army in vain. On the 4th of September, although his Orleanist opinions were well known, he had been called to the Ministry of War, where he had organized the resistance of Paris in anticipation of the siege.

M. Ernest Picard

M. Ernest Picard received the portfolio of Home Affairs, the very same that he had demanded on the 4th of September, and which had been assigned to M. Gambetta. M. Ernest Picard had intellect and a certain kind of influence. His name inspired confidence. It was claimed that "his specialty was common sense." He was a friend of Renan, Berthelot and Émile Ollivier. He had the

qualities necessary to conduct successfully the task of reorganizing the administration of the prefects which had been given over to an almost absolute anarchy since the conflict between Bordeaux and Paris. A deputy in the Legislative Body from 1858 to 1870 he had been the chief of the famous party of Five. Drawn from the Parisian middle class, a stout man with a ruddy complexion, a graceful and refined orator, intellectually sceptical and detached, he knew how to find happy phrases, but he did not stop at phrases.[1]

Admiral Pothuau

All the other Ministers had a brilliant parliamentary career behind them with the exception of Admiral Pothuau, marked out for the Admiralty in consequence of his happy share in the defence of Paris. He had been a rear-admiral since 1864. After the success of the affair of the "Gare-aux-bœufs" he had been promoted to the rank of vice-admiral, and the Department of the Seine in consideration of this fortunate episode in the siege had sent him to the National Assembly.

M. Dufaure

Appointed Keeper of the Seals, Minister of Justice, M. Dufaure was the honour of the old parliamentary party. A deputy from 1834 to 1848, representative in 1848 and 1849, he had been elected in five Departments on the 8th of February, 1871. His first appearance in politics dates from the Ministry of M. Thiers in 1836. He had then been named a Counsellor of State. Since then he had become Minister of Public Works in the Soult Cabinet (1839); Vice-President of the Chamber in 1842 and in 1845

[1] See l'Éloge d'Ernest Picard, spoken at the conference of barristers of the Court of Appeal by M. Léon Berard, Dec. 6, 1902; also an article of M. A. Bert in *Le Temps* of Nov. 2, 1889.

Cavaignac summoned him on the 13th of October, 1848, to the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Prince-President entrusted him with the same portfolio. On the 2nd of June, 1849, M. Dufaure was a Liberal of the old school, a Catholic and a communicant, of austere morals, severe upon himself, severe upon his friends, and formidable to his enemies. He had a short neck, round shoulders, an ample jaw, a surly air, and the fashion of his dress was antiquated. His eloquence was clear, precise, and strong. He had more reasoning power than imagination, and at least as much temper as character. He was not exactly a statesman, but he was an admirable parliamentary hand. These qualities were enough so long as the Liberal party remained in opposition. In essence M. Dufaure, like M. Jules Favre, remained an advocate. He held an important place in the Bar of Paris, of which he had been President under the Empire.[1]

M. Lambrecht

Like M. Dufaure, M. Lambrecht, the Minister of Commerce, was a personal friend of M. Thiers. A deputy from 1863 to 1869 he sat beside him and followed his inspiration. In the Legislative Body he had attracted attention by the extent of his information, the uprightness and precision of his mind, the elegance and neatness of his language. M. Thiers, who was not superior to flattery in favour of anybody who accepted his own opinions without discussion, said of M. Lambrecht that he was the "wisest of the wise."

M. de Larcy

M. de Larcy too had earned his stripes in parliamentary work. He had sat in the Chambers from 1839 to 1846, and in the

[1] Georges Picot, *M. Dufaure, sa vie et ses œuvres.* Paris, Hachette, 12mo.

National Assemblies from 1848 and 1849. As a magistrate he had sent in his resignation in 1830 at the accession of the Monarchy of July and had remained loyal to the Legitimist faith. In 1843 he betook himself with forty-three of his colleagues to the Comte de Chambord, and shared with them the honour of a stigmatizing vote from the Orleanist majority. For the rest, a Liberal, and perhaps, already, a disillusioned Liberal.

M. Pouyer-Quertier

Alone among all M. Pouyer-Quertier had had relations with the Imperial system, though somewhat distant. Sent to the Legislative Body by the Department of the Lower Seine, where he was at the head of important industrial establishments, he had been entered on the dynastic Right. He was a thorough Norman, his body tall and strong, his colour high, his whiskers thick and coarse, his eye quick and keen. The alertness and practical nature of his understanding, the certainty of his glance, the inspiration of his language, and the vigour of his stomach were of a character to make some impression on Bismarck. He was neither compromised nor worn by the weariness of the parliamentary conflicts. His shoulders were made for responsibility. His convictions on economical matters were firmly anchored. Rouen and the cotton industry had made him a protectionist. This fact was not likely to be obnoxious to M. Thiers. The indisputable competence which both enjoyed in these matters was hugely useful during the peace-negotiations.

On economical questions the Ministry was divided. Some of its members, MM. Jules Simon, de Larcy, Jules Favre, Dufaure, had at the time of the formation of the Cabinet made more or less

formal reservations in favour of free trade. But they had on the other hand declared their intention of aiding M. Thiers with all their might in the conclusion of peace.

The Head of the State had not appealed to their patriotism in vain. Accordingly they consented to make some sacrifices in the matter of their economical views, as they had done with their political opinions.

III

We now see M. Thiers and his new Cabinet in the presence of the Assembly. They set the example of union; but the Assembly had hardly acquired consciousness of its own existence before it felt itself already in the throes of grave dissensions.

In the midst of such difficulties, visible or divined, latent or in full play, the new Government entered on its numerous tasks: to fight out the conditions of peace, exorcise the domestic crisis, reorganize the country, snatch from hostile occupation the part of the territory taken in guarantee of the engagements entered on by the nation, to restore our financial credit, to place France again in possession of herself, and to bring back to her the confidence of the foreign Powers.

The Relations with the Powers

M. Thiers, from the very beginning, gave his thoughts to resuming contact with these Powers. He felt the valuable assistance which might accrue to him from an active diplomacy at the moment when he was entering on negotiations for peace. A new Europe was before us. Situations and interests had come into evidence which had not been in existence a year ago. A Talleyrand policy would perhaps prove successful

in the new conditions of the arrangement of the chess-board.

To begin with, there was Germany, which, completing the enterprise begun at the time of the war of the Duchies, and continued at Sadowa, had just accomplished her unity by placing the Imperial crown on the head of William I, King of Prussia. The new Empire, victorious and compact, directed by a vigorous genius, was aspiring to march henceforth at the head of Europe.

On the south-east of our frontiers another great nation had taken form. Profiting by circumstances, Victor Emmanuel had made Rome the capital of his kingdom, thus realizing the words of Napoleon III: "Italy free from the Alps to the Adriatic." This occupation of Rome had brought about the fall of the temporal power of the Papacy.

The events of which France had been the theatre had also had their rebound in the East. By repudiating the Treaty of Paris of 1856, and succeeding in getting the treaty of London signed, Russia had, without striking a blow, restored herself to the first rank among the great Powers. And, at the price of a well-considered neutrality, the Empire of the Czars had resumed its liberty of action in the East.

As for Austria, she was from henceforth swallowed up in the double disaster, which united Germany without her and in opposition to her. For a long time she had been on the quest of new roads without hope of finding any which were really to her advantage.

England gathered no benefit from the defeat of France. The repudiation of the Treaty of Paris hit her directly. She retired within herself meditating upon the distant consequences of these events,

understanding from this time forward the economical importance of the Suez Canal, turning her eyes persistently towards Egypt, but without yet perceiving that the conditions imposed on France by Germany and the unity of the Empire were going to allow the latter to develop her commerce, her industries, her sea-power, and to organize the economical struggle against the ancient "sovereign of the sea."

To sum up: if ever the phrase, "There is no longer a Europe," was true, it was true then.

M. Thiers was not a Talleyrand. But perhaps, under such circumstances, Talleyrand would have done no better. However that may be, M. Thiers, overwhelmed with other pre-occupations, and without going to the bottom of the problem, confined himself to discounting somewhat vaguely the goodwill of certain Powers, in order to obtain mitigations in detail of the prescriptions of the Treaty of Peace. He also felt that in order to carry out its stipulations, and to pay the enormous ransom imposed by Prussia, the sympathies of Europe were essential to the new French Government.

The new Ambassadors

In obedience to these imperious considerations, M. Thiers, during the course of the 19th of February, after having finally formed his Cabinet, immediately secured the representation of France abroad. He appointed the Duke de Broglie to the Embassy at London, the Marquis de Bonneville to that of Vienna; the Duke de Noailles, former peer of France, to that of St. Petersburg; the Marquis de Vogüé to Constantinople; the Marquis de Bouillé to Madrid; the Comte de Bourgoing to the Legation at the Hague, and the Comte d'Harcourt to the Vatican Embassy. Further, the Marquis de Gabriac was named Chargé-d'affaires at Berlin.

These selections were skilful. M. Thiers smoothed the feelings of the monarchical parties by confiding these honourable posts to their representatives. He also got rid of formidable opponents. He confided the defence of our interests abroad to prudent hands. Lastly he reassured Europe by commissioning to Sovereigns and Courts well known names and familiar faces.

Administrative Persons

By another series of urgent measures he appointed the men who were to represent the new Government in the Departments. He needed a body of administratives inspiring him with confidence, and satisfying the numerous claims made by the new Deputies.

Those whom the Government of the 4th of September had sent into the Provinces showed traces of the confusion of the time, and of hasty improvisation. Furthermore, political passions in France are always susceptible to this question of persons. The Imperial tradition has weighed so heavily upon the successive Governments that no one of them has been able to establish an absolute neutrality in the administration.

M. Thiers took for his inspiration in the changes which he imposed the ideas which had guided him in the formation of his Ministry. He explains himself on the subject in the following terms :—

All the Departments contain the different parties which divide and unhappily disturb our country, he says. Now the case of the prefects is the same as that of the Government itself. If they suit one party, they are likely to displease the other.

But just as the Government ought to be, by its impartiality, its spirit of justice, a middle term accepted by the reasonable parties and imposed upon those who are not so, in the same manner the prefects ought, by force of tact, sense of proportion, and

in cases of need by firmness, to master men and things, and direct them to the common good of all.

We have made selection, to begin with, from the enlightened classes, without favour and without party spirit, of the individuals who in our opinion are the most deserving, granting preference to merit in social position, but not any the more neglecting that position which is a means of influence.

M. Thiers, who knew the men, and who was a judge of men, quickly replaced the administratives of the National Defence.

In order to win acceptance for his policy from the Right, he already professed the maxim, which shows his singular skill in the handling of parties: *the Republic without republicans*. As a matter of fact, the selections which he made prepared a staff of republicans for the Republic; he implanted convictions in the waverers by the confidence which he bestowed on them; he bound the undecided to the fortunes of the new Government; he restrained the claims of the ambitious by the hope of speedy fruition. His skill in making appointments was able to enlist a battalion of distinguished functionaries who in fact began to administer the country in the name of the Republic, and who, assuming a justified authority in the Departments, were able soon to efface in the population the memories at first so lively of the Imperial administration.

M. Léon Say was appointed Prefect of the Seine; M. Foucher de Careil in Seine-et-Marne; M. Ferdinand Duval in the Gironde; M. Charles Ferry in Haute-Garonne; M. Valentin in the Rhône; M. Poubelle in the Isère; M. Firman in the Ardennes; M. Alfred Decrais in Indre-et-Loire; M. Camescasse in the Cher; M. Paul Cambon in the Aube; M.

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Doniol in the Loire-Inférieure; M. Hendlé in Loire-et-Cher; M. Le Myre de Vilers at Algiers.

Administrative Reform

Through the activity of a man of experience the Government gradually resumed life and shape.

A deeper revolution, more radical reforms, might perhaps have been desired. The crisis had brought to light defects in the administrative system which might have been corrected. A more daring, more innovating spirit might have profited by this unique season to deal a stroke of the spade into the crumbling portions of the Napoleonic edifice, and to attempt to build up a new France. Bonaparte himself had in other times accomplished a work of this nature. But Bonaparte was a victor; he had around him the staff bequeathed to him by the Revolution; and then he was young; he was free from any pledges; he could venture on anything.

M. Thiers was old. He trailed alo[illegible]im the weight and the servitude of a long [illegible]t having reached that supreme detachme[illegible]ich is the gift to some from the approach of death: this old man took his own person into account in his combinations for the future!

Over and above this, of all the past inscribed in that record of facts, which is called experience, there was one portion which remained for his green old age an ideal, because his youth had known only its enthusiasms, viz. the Napoleonic legend. The man who was for France a Director rather than a Dictator could not free himself from the burden of the eighteen volumes of the *History of the Consulate and the Empire*. Public life had been born in the hour when Liberalism was all but confused with Bonapartism. In such sort that on the morrow

of Sedan the "indispensable man" did not completely escape the influence of the Corsican adventurer.

Let us add that for the work of restoration in prospect M. Thiers stood alone. Or rather his old age found nothing in front of it but youth and the passions of an inexperienced Assembly. The Republicans were men of theories and enthusiasm; no less so the Monarchists. Issuing from the depths of their provinces and dragged into the open day of public debates they appeared on the scene dazzled and, as it were, blinded. In their speeches, their management, their conduct, we note traces of hesitation, of awkwardness.

Duc Albert de Broglie, with his high intellectual and moral standards, but with his cold and awkward dignity, represents this majority fairly well. The Assembly, ardent and pusillanimous at the same time, was not suited to exercise that proper control which was demanded by the activity of the President alike impassioned and humdrum. The qualities and deficiencies of the two were in opposition, but were not mutually complementary. France, in her misfortunes, was here again the victim of her long errors; these men who met around her gasping body with the purpose of comforting and healing were themselves infected with the same diseases from which she was suffering.

After the multiplicity of shocks which had again and again broken the history of the century, the older generations were too old, the young too inexperienced. The fulness of manhood was wanting; and then, we are bound to say it, if heart and understanding were there, genius was absent.

IV

Peace Negotiations

These first measures once taken, nothing was more pressing than to open the final negotiations for the conclusion of peace. Every minute lost prolonged the universal anguish, and increased, perhaps, the sacrifices to which it was necessary to consent. Accordingly, the Assembly, after having appointed a commission of fifteen members charged to assist and, in case of need, control the negotiators, had no longer any but one thought: to put an end to the period of unendurable anxiety through which we were passing. On the very evening of the reading of his message-programme to the National Assembly, the 17th of February, M. Thiers started for Paris. On the 21st, at 1 p.m., he was with Bismarck.

Bismarck had steadily refused to make known before the elections the conditions which he would affix to the peace. He entrenched himself behind the imperative orders of the King; "He would not declare himself," he said, "except face to face with the Commissioners of the Assembly!"[1]

From the official declarations which had followed on the occupation of Strasburg and Metz, it might be concluded that the victor intended to keep Alsace and Lorraine. However, Bismarck himself has said once and again that his opinion was not fixed. He declared later, in a conversation which he had with M. Crispi, that for a long time, even after Sedan, he had no clear-cut idea to propose to the King, and that "in matters of this kind the de-

[1] Sorel, *Histoire diplomatique de la guerre franco-allemande*, t. ii. p. 62.

cision is much in the hands of the moment."[1] It seems certain, to-day, that immediately after Sedan Bismarck's view was not to order the advance of the army and not to besiege Paris. He supported the opinion that the negotiations for peace should be opened with the Empress-regent. He was convinced, "in a surprising manner" that the march upon Paris was a mistake. But Count von Moltke had been of an entirely opposite opinion, and finally had won the day. These remarkable divergencies of view between the two advisers of the Emperor William were maintained throughout the whole campaign.[2] Bismarck has also said and often repeated that the annexation of Lorraine had been imposed upon him by the Head Quarter Staff.

Thus, still reflecting on what he was about to do, he abstained from pronouncing the decisive words, reserving to himself the power of coming to a decision at the last moment, and according to the attitude which he should observe on the side of France and of her new Government.

Unfortunately on this subject hints were supplied to him in profusion. While he kept his cards tightly closed in his two hands, M. Thiers arrived with his wide open before him. France, in fact, was to be no less unhappy in her diplomatic than in her military operations.

The readiness and vivacity of the public sentiment were openly revealed before the attentive statesman who "felt the pulse of opinion, and who noted

[1] See the quotation in *Bismarck démasqué*, p. 253. cf. L. Schneider, *L'Empereur Guillaume, Souvenirs intimes*, t. ii. p. 301.

[2] See Ottokar Lorenz, *Kaiser Wilhelm und die Begründung des Reichs* (1866–1871). Zena, 1902, 8°, p. 473.

with deep delight that, in the words of M. Albert Sorel, "the passion of war had been succeeded by the passion for peace."

From the day when M. Jules Favre, accepting the painful mandate, which had been confided to him by the Government of National Defence seated at Paris, had come to Versailles, alone, and without the technical support which should have been afforded him by General Trochu, to treat for an armistice and the surrender of Paris, Prince Bismarck, feeling himself on his own soil, had conducted with consummate art the diplomatic campaign which was to be the crown of the scientific military campaign directed by Count Moltke.

The Attitude of Germany

After all, the German Government too felt the desire to be done with the war.[1]

Germany had but little to gain by the prolongation of the struggle. The German troops were in occupation of more territory than German policy could think of retaining. The new expenses, the sacrifices of all kinds, which were imposed by the necessity of maintaining nearly a million men in France, would be felt by Germany in the form of very heavy charges, if the figure of the indemnity, which it was possible to wring out of France was overstepped. It had been said, and repeatedly said, in Germany that Paris would only hold out for some weeks, and the capitulation had had to

[1] This is now clearly shown with full evidence from the chapter of the *Souvenirs* de M. de Bismarck entitled *Versailles*, t. ii. p. 132. See also all the texts collected by Alfred Duquet, *Paris, la Capitulation*, p. 22, *et sqq.* In the month of October the Chancellor had had the Bishop of Orleans sounded to know whether he would consent to be the intermediary between the King of Prussia and the Government of National Defence. Abbé Lagrange, *Vie de Mgr. Dupanloup*, t. iii. p. 205.

be waited for during several months. Bismarck himself recalls, in his *Souvenirs*, "the anxiety aroused in the Fatherland by the stagnation of the siege." It had been at least affirmed that Paris once beaten to the ground, France would surrender herself bound hand and foot to the victor.

Attitude of Europe

What a surprise, what a deception for the German troops, for the German peoples, if, even after this capitulation, France did not disarm, and if the guerilla war, with its uncertainty and its torturing anxieties, succeeded the great war, in which the staff officers had obtained such brilliant and such complete successes! In the Morvan, in Auvergne, in the Jura, the defence might perhaps continue itself for some time. Generals like Chanzy and Faidherbe declared that it was still possible to fight. The army commanded by Bourbaki, then by Clinchant, was operating in the east. Cremer was regaining Lyons at the head of a body of 15,000 men. Gambetta persisted in his resolve, at once grim and well considered, to fight to the last cartridge.

On the other hand, Europe, which had at first looked on at the defeat of France perhaps with satisfaction, and in any case without emotion, was no longer altogether of the same way of thinking. Certain Cabinets began to reflect upon the danger which would accrue to the balance of power in Europe from the uncontested supremacy of Germany.

Already, on the 30th of October, 1870, Austria had thought the moment opportune for intervention. Her ambassador, M. de Wimpfen, had, in the name of Count Beust, made an application to Bismarck, which had violently irritated and

much disquieted the latter. The despatch ended in these words: "The Cabinet of Vienna does not approve of the absolute reserve of an indifferent Europe.. It considers, on the contrary, that it is its duty to declare that it still believes in the general interests of Europe, and in a peace brought about by the impartial intervention of neutrals." In England a movement favourable to France began to grow and had found its echo in the sitting of the House of Commons on the 17th of February; Sir Robert Peel had opened the debate by strongly blaming the policy of non-interference of the Gladstone Cabinet. Mr. Torrens had demanded with much precision an English intervention. "The moment has come," he had said, "to adopt a more resolute policy and to prevent exorbitant conditions from being imposed upon France." The motion involving this opinion had been rejected by the ministerial majority; the impression, however, had been profound. Bismarck does not conceal the anxiety which was inspired in him by "these humanitarian sentiments which England requires of all other Powers, without, by the way, invariably applying them herself." He closely watched the sentiments of the neutral Courts, "stimulated," as he said, "by the Republican sympathies of America."

The Emperor of Russia, who, at the moment of the signature of the preliminaries, addressed a telegram of congratulation to the Emperor of Germany, which was a fresh wound for the vanquished, had, none the less, in repudiating the article in the Treaty of 1856, relative to the neutrality of the Black Sea, indirectly aroused the sentiment of a certain solidarity in Europe.

Furthermore, with a view to settling the difficulty

of the Black Sea, Bismarck, embarrassed and obliged to take into account the position of England, had soon been obliged to fall in with the idea of a meeting of a Conference in London, to which France had been invited, at the same time as the other Powers; the first sittings had even been adjourned in order to allow our plenipotentiary to appear. The tribunal of arbitration was in some sense assembled and constituted. After long hesitation the Government of National Defence had decided to accept the invitation of England. M. Jules Favre was appointed plenipotentiary, and the Cabinet of London demanded the necessary passes at Versailles.

Now, Bismarck remembered the advantages which Prince Talleyrand had been able to extract in 1814 from the Congress which met at Vienna. The idea of seeing Europe "by means of a Congress pare down the reward of her victory for Germany"—these are his own expressions—"kept him awake o' nights."[1]

Wishing at all cost to avoid the departure of M. Jules Favre for London, Bismarck multiplied incidents, and ended by preventing the arrival of the invitation at a useful time; the safe-conducts, which would have permitted the Minister of Foreign Affairs to leave Paris, were not delivered. Lastly, the bom-

[1] "I already feared at Versailles," he has himself written with great clearness, "I feared that the participation of France in the conferences in London relative to the clauses of the treaty of Paris concerning the Black Sea, might be utilized to graft, with the audacity of which Talleyrand had given proofs at Vienna, the Franco-German question upon the discussions provided by the programme. That is the reason why, in spite of many intercessions, I set in action external influences and *those of the country* to prevent the presence of Jules Favre at that Conference." (*Souvenirs*, t. ii. p. 374.)

bardment having begun on the 5th of January, "on a beautiful winter's morning,"[1] M. Jules Favre refused to start. Thus Bismarck had gained his ends.

Attitude of France

These two relatively weak points in the situation of Germany, otherwise so strong, the weariness of the war, and the coincidence of a conference in London, had not escaped the clear sight of the Delegation of the Government of National Defence in the Provinces. Gambetta had analysed the situation in the letters which he addressed to Jules Favre on the very eve of the surrender of Paris. He had explained himself forcibly on the advantages which would accrue in not associating the negotiation for peace with that for the capitulation of Paris: "It is Paris that has been reduced, not France. Any intromission with another field would bring you to credit the enemy with advantages which he is far from having acquired . . ." And with the authority, which a clear view of the situation gave him, he went on so far as to say: "All that you accomplish outside interests peculiar to Paris, without our consent or our ratification, would be null and void." The "young tribune," the "raving lunatic," showed in this the sagacity and prudence of the most experienced diplomatist. If it was thought that the hour had come for negotiation, the terrible player whom we had in front of us should have been faced, without bluff surely, but no less surely without dejection.

Now, in the negotiation for the armistice, and since the effective cessation of hostilities, every kind of fault had been committed. M. Jules Favre

[1] Telegram from King William to Queen Augusta.

had treated not merely in the name of Paris, but in the name of France, without having either informed or consulted the Delegation at Bordeaux; he had in fact, yielded to the enemy, with a stroke of his pen, a field which he would not have won till after long efforts; he had sacrificed the army of Bourbaki by a wording whose very import he had not understood; and, more than all, the Government of Paris had, in connexion with the incident of the elections, taken up a position contrary to the Delegation of Bordeaux without taking into account the interest which, during the negotiation, and even in view of the supreme eventuality of a rupture, France had in smoothing down the party of resistance and war to the bitter end![1]

The Negotiation of the Armistice

If M. Jules Favre and his colleagues in the Government of Paris had had more experience or a more comprehensive view of the situation, and if, above all, they had not allowed themselves to be driven into a corner in the matter of revictualling the capital, they would have been obliged, as soon as they claimed to treat in the name of France, to assemble the whole Government, including the Delegation of Bordeaux, or at least to put themselves in relations with it, and to come to an understanding with Gambetta. The latter was still a force, since he disturbed Bismarck's peace of mind. It is true that in that case Gambetta, by the force of circumstances, would have become the actual negotiator.

The conflict which had broken out between the two fractions of the Government, had had, as we see, the most deplorable effects upon the first

[1] Valfrey, *Histoire de la Diplomatie du Gouvernement de la Défense nationale, troisième partie*, p. 38, *et seq.*

negotiations. In the three weeks which passed away between the signing of the armistice and the resumption of the peace negotiations, other faults were committed. Gambetta had been obliged to send in his resignation on the 5th of February. A very keen conflict had arisen between the Government of Paris and the Delegation of Bordeaux in reference to the ineligibility of Bonapartists entered by the latter in the decree summoning the electors. In the presence of the formal decision of the Government of Paris not to allow any exclusion clause to appear in the decree M. Gambetta had resigned his functions. His assistance, his advice, were then lost, as were those of the generals, like Chanzy and Faidherbe, who shared his views.

The elections had been made on this one question : *peace* or *war*. Now, when questions so simple in appearance, so complex in reality, are placed before an electoral body, badly informed or confused, it is apt to find a solution contrary to its own interests and often contrary to its own sentiments.

The Sentiments of the Assembly

The Assembly once assembled had committed a new error in allowing Keller's motion to be debated before it, by which the deputies of Alsace and Lorraine demanded a solemn declaration, that Alsace and Lorraine were "indissolubly united to the territory of France." This amounted to a very imprudent enunciation of that terrible formula, which Bismarck himself had as yet been unwilling to put forward, and to compelling the Assembly to disarm its negotiators in anticipation by the resolution, which it voted : "to trust their wisdom and patriotism." This formula was a blank cheque, as M. Rochefort had at once pointed out.

Lastly, M. Thiers himself, who since the regrettable check to the armistice of the 31st of October had pronounced definitely for peace, had not been able to resist the temptation to get the policy, which he was going to pursue at Versailles, approved in advance. By an incomprehensible error in tactics, he had set the situation in full light by forcing the Assembly, in a sense, to declare itself, and caging it in the dilemma in which the country had already been placed: "Have the courage of your opinions: *either war, or peace.*"

Bismarck then was as fully informed as he possibly could be. He had seen quite recently a member of the higher French clergy, Cardinal Bonnechose, archbishop of Rouen, who had with considerable simplicity pleaded with him on behalf of the temporal power of the Pope. He had skilfully questioned him upon the sentiments of the French clergy and the provinces, and he had learned the degree to which these sentiments were everywhere favourable to peace.[1] The skilful Chancellor had then nothing to do but take advantage of his opportunities, when, on the 21st of February, at noon, he saw coming to him at Versailles M. Thiers, Head of the Executive Power of the French Republic, alone, charged with the negotiation and responsible for it.

State of Mind of M. Thiers

M. Thiers had longed for this interview, so dangerous for himself. I have mentioned the great qualities of M. Thiers, his rare understanding, and his great knowledge of European affairs; however he had neither the aptitudes nor the experience of a negotiator. His only diplomatic campaign, that of 1840, had ended in a formidable

[1] Mgr. Besson, *Vie du Cardinal de Bonnechose, archevêque de Rouen*, t. ii. p. 150. See also Ottokar Lorenz, l.c. p. 518.

check. In the course of the recent events his journey to Russia had not pointed to any technical superiority in him; it certainly seems that he had allowed himself to be influenced by the kind consideration which had been shown him, and that he had not known how to read into the game of the different Governments with which he had had to do. However that may be, he had obtained nothing. Europe had been for him "undiscoverable."[1]

Accordingly, he does not seem to have concerned himself at first to take advantage of the situation which was created for us by the Conference of Neutrals in London. Having taken, as we have said, the formal attitude since his return to France of leader of the peace party, he was, so to say, consistent with himself in showing himself prepared in advance for the greatest sacrifices. He thought that he would gain more in crossing swords with the man whom he called "a barbarian with genius" than in the slow development of one of those diplomatic conferences of which he had no experience.

In this, even from his own point of view, he was mistaken. His good qualities would have been more in their place in the presence of an Areopagus deliberating on the consequences of the German victories. His eloquence, his intelligence, his age, would have acted upon what would have been in some sort a tribunal of arbitration, while his very merits clashed with one another in the presence of the cool determination of his powerful adversary. M. Thiers was quick-tempered, open, and somewhat wordy. Bismarck had not been slow to recognize his weak point. He thus passed judg-

[1] Gabriac, *Souvenirs diplomatiques*, p. 15, *seq.*

ment on him in his familiar circle: "He is an amiable and skilful man, intellectual and brilliant; but for all that he is not a diplomatist; he is too sentimental for that. He is indisputably shrewder than Jules Favre, but he, too, lets himself be bluffed too easily. He has an unfortunate mania; he protracts the negotiations by developments which have nothing to do with them. . . ."[1]

Bismarck

We know Bismarck; his audacity, his cunning, his coolness. The art of diplomacy was eminently his. An attentive observer, patient listener, rude interrupter, his genius, delighted with a silent joy in preparing a snare with deliberation, circumventing an adversary, suddenly surprising him, and flinging him on his back. A powerful and restless personality in which sentiments often just were limited and crushed by a cold reason, and the despotic *maestria* of his profession. He was always on deck, and carried on his business in every kind of costume, even in "bathing drawers." This formidable champion had beaten all the champions, Beust, Gortschakoff, Napoleon III. In negotiations he never considered the man, but the cause; never the appearances, but the realities; never the theory, but the profit; never the universal point of view, but the national interest.

He enjoyed treating with M. Thiers, because he liked men of experience, and he thought him a foeman worthy of his steel; but above all because he knew that it was the interest of Germany to conclude peace as soon as possible with a Government of the greatest possible authority in France and in the face of Europe, and with the best chances of duration.

[1] Maurice Busch, *Les Mémoires de Bismarck*, t. ii. p. 183.

The negotiation which now began was his supreme campaign, that which crowned his trilogy, of which the two first dramas—the affair of the Duchies, and the Austrian War—had been such a complete success.

There was nothing more to do except to conclude with a masterly game which would gather up all the profits in the present, and supply every security for the future. If he was to commit any fault, it could only be from excess of confidence in his own strength, and in the power of that country, that army, which a century of toil and self-denial had prepared to be the instrument of his overwhelming practicality.

The robust Pomeranian could be weakened by only one form of drunkenness, the intoxication of victory.

Bismarck, then, in preparation for this decisive hour, had made his dispositions wisely, and taken his precautions minutely; he was armed on the side of Europe; he had comprehended all the profit that could be made from the rivalry of parties in France, and even from the misunderstandings existing between Paris and the provinces, between the Government of National Defence, and the Delegation of Bordeaux; he had taken advantage of the three weeks' armistice to consolidate the position of the allied armies in every direction, and to tune the Press and public opinion in Germany and Europe; he had seen with a deep joy the end of the armistice arrive which drove back the French negotiators upon delays of a startling brevity.

It is a hardly credible fact, but one which is now attested by undisputed revelations, that Bismarck met his most serious difficulties in his immediate circle in the following of the Emperor. On the 8th

of February a conference had taken place in the Emperor's quarters, at which were present the Crown Prince, Moltke, Roon, Podbielski, Boyen and Treskow. The question was to provide for what would have to be done in the case in which peace should not be signed at the expiration of the armistice.

At the very beginning the bitter antagonism between Bismarck and Moltke had broken out and displayed itself in such a lively fashion that the *serious* mediation of the Emperor had been necessary to appease the two adversaries. Bismarck reproached the military party with having done all that was wanted since the arrangement of the armistice to render the near conclusion of the peace, which he considered necessary, impossible. On his side Moltke reproached the diplomatists with making too many advances to the French. Bismarck had been much disturbed by these objections and this resistance.

His mind remained in suspense. However, he inclined to the idea that Germany ought not to keep Metz. He did not consider the reasons set forth by the military party for the annexation of this fortress decisive. He calculated that it would be sufficient to disarm it, and that it would be possible to establish another strong place behind it.

The Question of Metz

The information recently published, coming from the circle of the Grand Duke of Baden, the Crown Prince and the Minister of Southern Germany, confirm a phrase occurring in Busch's *Memoirs* as expressing the thoughts of the German statesman, at the time when this supreme question was under discussion: "If only"—these are the words attributed to the Chancellor

himself—" France could give us a milliard more, we might perhaps leave Metz and construct another strong place some kilomètres further off in the dissection of Falkenburg and Saarbruck. We could also leave her Belfort, which has never been German. I am not so bent, as all that amounts to, on having such a quantity of Frenchmen in our country. But the military men will never hear the abandonment of Metz spoken of, and perhaps they will be right." [1]

The elections to the National Assembly, such as they had been in Alsace-Lorraine (Feb. 8, 1871) permitted an anticipation that the incorporation of the two provinces in the Empire would provoke serious difficulties.

Also, inside the Emperor's circle, opinions on the subject of the annexation, especially of Lorraine, were more and more divided. The proposals of Prince Adalbert were carefully examined concerning the acquisitions of naval stations, and certain French colonies (Sargon and Cochin China, or perhaps Martinique, Saint Pierre and Miquelon), while demanding, if need be, part of the French fleet. But M. Delbruck, a Prussian Minister, very skilful and very influential, was opposed to this policy of colonial

[1] Memoirs collected by Busch (t. i. p. 322, French edition). Cf. Ottokar Lorenz, l.c. pp. 520 and sqq. The dissensions between the Head Quarter Staff are confirmed by this passage of the *Souvenirs* of Louis Schneider upon the Emperor William (t. iii. p. 212): " The conditions of the armistice, and the successive relaxations which were introduced into it, were already the object of very sharp criticism on the part of the Head Quarter Staff. But formal blame was attached to what followed (that is to say the negotiations with M. Thiers). From the military point of view complaints were made of seeing the Chancellor of the Empire listen neither to advice nor entreaties . . . On the other side variations were played on the theme : *Cedant arma togae.*

expansion; Bismarck himself thought it premature: he declared that the demand for part of the fleet would appear more humiliating to France than a greater annexation of territory.

German doubts

The election of the National Assembly had struck the minds of the Germans at Versailles. France was believed to be at a lower level, and perhaps too more divided than she was shown to be in reality. There could no longer be any question now of treating with the Emperor Napoleon III, since a regular Assembly had been constituted.

The Germans were then really embarrassed, and a little "sobered." They asked themselves whether it was wise to let themselves be carried away by the exigence of the military party. There was a time when, to employ the actual expressions of the author from whom we borrow these details, "an opinion was held at Versailles, that the negotiations would be very difficult, and that one would not hope to realize the entire programme of the Head Quarter Staff, so far as the cession of territory was concerned."

It was thought that it would be necessary to yield on the subject of Metz. Bismarck, who now wanted peace, visibly tended to their solution without imposing it. The Crown Prince was of this opinion. The Grand Duke of Baden was sounded to act in the same sense upon the Emperor. The latter, however, remained attached to the views of the Staff.

M. Thiers at Versailles

Things were in this position when M. Thiers arrived at Versailles on the 21st of February.

The delays of the armistice, already prolonged, expired on the 24th. Prince Bismarck, in full

possession of his part as negotiator, took from the beginning a decided attitude.

To the request for a prolongation, formulated in the first instance by M. Thiers, he opposed a formal refusal: "I am not master," he said; "I am reproached with being too weak; the campaign directed against me at Prague is being again begun; it did me much harm; it is said that I do not know how to reduce you. In short, I have an express order from the King."

However, on the insistence of M. Thiers, he betook himself to the Emperor, and obtained, with great difficulty, he affirmed, a prolongation of five days. But by this first engagement he had in some sort broken the attack of his adversary. He did not allow the question to be dealt with thoroughly again. Knowing the anxiety of the French Government, he demanded the entrance into Paris for the King and the German army.

M. Thiers, frightened, fought against this demand by pointing out all its perils. Paris was armed, irritated. Perhaps they were running to meet a catastrophe. The attitude of Bismarck remained impassive. However, he indicated as a possible concession the occupation of an extreme quarter of Paris, the Champs-Elysées for example.

The German demands

Lastly, M. Thiers was obliged himself to speak of the conditions of peace. "Let us now come to the great subject," he said to Bismarck. The latter then revealed at a single blow the extreme demands of Germany: Alsace, Metz, with the part of Lorraine forming the Department of the Moselle, an indemnity of six milliards, and the occupation of the French territory during the time necessary to realize the complete

payment. He alluded to Savoy and Nice, which might be ceded back to Italy. He spoke of Nancy, "which the Head Quarter Staff wished to keep."

The discussion was long. M. Thiers compelled himself to master his emotion. He fastened above all on the discussion of the question of the milliards of the indemnity. The figure appeared to him monstrous. "It is not possible," he said; "it is the military men, who have suggested these figures to you, not financiers." Then he returned to the question of Lorraine. "You had only spoken to me of the German part of Lorraine. Doubtless, but we want Metz to ensure our safety." M. Thiers did not dare conclude; he thought of the consequences if the negotiations came to nothing: the war prolonged fresh disasters! He was even afraid to let it be thought that he rejected these conditions. "I have listened to you without saying a word," he added, "but do not think that I admit your demands. Alsace, Metz, a French town, and six milliards, all that is impossible. We will discuss the question. If you ask me for the impossible, I shall withdraw, and you will govern France." After it had been decided to prolong the armistice, the meeting was adjourned till the next day.

M. Thiers and the Emperor

On the following day, the 22nd of February, M. Thiers came back alone to Versailles, and asked to see the Emperor in the hope of obtaining some concession from him. But the Emperor only spoke of the entrance of the German troops into Paris. On the other points Bismarck had taken his precautions. The Emperor did not deal with the question thoroughly. The Chancellor had instructed M. Thiers: "The Emperor does not like

to speak of business except in the presence of his Ministers." M. Thiers saw also the Crown Prince.

Conversation with the Crown Prince

On him his action was quite different. The old man, broken with fatigue and emotion, speaking with eloquence of the war which he had wished to avert, of the fault of the Imperial Government, of the dangers which an ill-advised peace would cause to Europe, touched the sensitive soul of the Crown Prince. He declared with energy that France could not endure the loss of Metz, and that if such a condition were adhered to, it was necessary to begin the war again. He made the mistake of dissipating a little the force of his discussion by demanding at the same time a diminution on the figure of the indemnity, and opposing the entrance of the German troops into Paris. Perhaps M. Thiers did not take sufficiently into account the effect which he produced. After this interview the Prince Imperial seemed to his circle disposed "to give up Metz." General von Blumenthal, his confidential friend, said that "it turned the heart in one's body to renounce Metz and to leave Paris, looking like a fool."

The Emperor, without being in the same frame of mind as his son, conferred the next day (February 23rd) with the Grand Duke of Baden. "Such was his emotion *at thinking that it would be necessary to leave Metz to France*, that it was difficult to calm him by telling him that these were the first sentiments at the inception of the negotiations, and that probably Bismarck would arrange this matter according to the Emperor's wishes." The Grand Duke of Baden suggested the idea that perhaps the acquisition of Luxemburg would be preferable.

Second Interview with Bismarck

Matters had reached this point, when, on the same day, on the 23rd of February, M. Thiers returned to Versailles for a fresh interview with Prince Bismarck. He had caused M. Jules Favre to accompany him.

M. Thiers entered then on a "long discussion" as to Metz. He reminded Bismarck that in November the Chancellor had promised to procure its restoration to France: "What was possible in November," replied Bismarck, "is no longer possible to-day after three months' bloodshed"; and to deal the winning blow, he added that, "if the French plenipotentiaries were not ready to abandon Metz, an immediate rupture was necessary." "We shall see if we are to break with you," replied M. Thiers; "let us pass to the other questions." That was the decisive sentence. A recourse to the deputation of fifteen members would perhaps have been a precious resource at this moment.

However that may be, it was in the course of this day, after the interview in the morning between Count Bismarck and MM. Thiers and Jules Favre, that the Chancellor formed the idea that Germany would be able to keep Metz. "He had seen at once by the manner of M. Thiers and in his "copious language," that he was not determined to begin the war again on the question of Metz.

Immediately after this interview, that is to say, in the afternoon of the 23rd, Von Kewdell apprised the Grand Duke of Baden in great haste on behalf of Bismarck, that care must be taken above all not to let the French guess that Germany would perhaps have consented to abandon Metz.

The Parliamentary Committee

The same evening M. Thiers summoned the Committee and imparted to it the demands of Germany and his own appre-

hensions. Is it true, as has been said, that the discouragement of the Parliamentary Committee, and the desire to come to a conclusion, were so universal, that they resigned themselves almost without a discussion to submission to the will of the victor? In any case M. Thiers did not find any consolation in this contact with the delegation of the Assembly.

M. Thiers obtains Belfort

A fresh interview took place on the 24th between Count Bismarck and the French plenipotentiaries. This was the occasion on which M. Thiers, deeply moved and beside himself, made the supreme effort, which snatched from the tenacious calculations of Bismarck the fortress of Belfort and the reduction of one milliard on the figure of the indemnity: "No," cried he, "I will never yield Belfort and Metz in the same breath. You wish to ruin France in her finances, in her frontiers! Well! Take her, conduct her administration, collect her revenues, and you will have to govern her in the face of Europe, if Europe permits."[1]

Bismarck replied in the end that he was about to take the orders of the Emperor. After an absence which appeared very long to the French plenipotentiaries, and left them "in an indescribable state of anguish," after having conferred with Von Moltke, then with the Emperor, he gave way as to Belfort, and the figure of the indemnity. The Parliamentary Committee was informed the same evening and gave its consent.

The protocols were drawn up on the 25th, and the instrument, which henceforth constituted the

[1] England had intervened with Bismarck by a telegram on the 24th of February to obtain a remission upon the total of the indemnity. See Jules Favre, t. iii. p. 100.

preliminaries of the peace between France and Germany was signed on Sunday, the 26th of February, towards four o'clock.[1]

France renounced Alsace and a part of Lorraine, agreeably to a line traced upon the map which had been published in September 1870, and which was appended to the treaty. It was the famous map "with the green border." The indicated line had undergone only the following modifications: In the former Department of the Moselle the villages of Sainte-Marie-aux-Nimes near Saint-Privat-la-Montagne, and of Vionville on the west of Rézonville, were ceded to Germany; on the other hand, the town and fortifications of Belfort remained to France, with a radius which was to be determined later on.

The indemnity of war was fixed at five milliards. The stipulations on the subject of the occupation of French territory and its evacuation fixed delays according to the dates of the payments of the indemnity.

It was stipulated that the inhabitants of the ceded territories were at liberty to emigrate, and that the German Government could not take any measures against them affecting their persons or their property. The prisoners of war were to be restored immediately after the exchange of the ratifications of the preliminaries.

The negotiations for the definitive treaty of peace

[1] It is hardly necessary for me to say that all the information given in the text is derived from absolutely certain sources. Compare the *Notes et Souvenirs* de M. Thiers, the narrative of Jules Favre, *Gouvernement de la Défense nationale*, t. iii. p. 98, with that of Ottokar Lorenz, l.c. p. 521. See also Busch, *Memoirs*; the *Souvenirs* of Prince Bismarck, etc.

were to take place at Brussels, after the ratification of the preliminaries by the National Assembly and the Emperor of Germany.

In one of the agreements appended it was stipulated that the German troops should enter Paris and occupy the quarter of the Champs-Elysées from the first of March till the ratification.

Signature of the Preliminaries of Versailles

M. Adolphe Thiers and M. Jules Favre signed the treaty for France, and Bismarck for Germany; the Representatives of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and the Grand Duchy of Baden, introduced at the last moment, had simply given their adhesion.

At the time of signing the preliminaries of peace M. Thiers and Prince Bismarck had a conversation on the special diplomatic position of the states of Southern Germany. M. Thiers demanded that the instrument of the peace preliminaries should be signed by each of the allied sovereigns, and not by Prince Bismarck in the name of the whole of Germany. "Do you already want to strip the leaves off the unity of Germany?" replied the latter. M. Thiers answered: "Ah! we made it!" "Perhaps," said Bismarck with a shrug of the shoulders. He might have said: "Certainly."[1]

Bismarck wished to sign with a gold pen which the ladies of a German town had offered him for the occasion. M. Jules Favre could recall how on the day of the signing of the armistice Bismarck had asked him to set his seal on the agreement. The Minister of Foreign Affairs used a ring in which was set a cameo representing a woman in an antique dress standing up. In his confusion, M. Jules Favre

[1] Ottokar Lorenz, p. 526.

placed the seal horizontally, and Bismarck is said to have remarked to him: "Ah! M. Jules Favre, you are upsetting your Republic."

M. Thiers and M. Jules Favre left Versailles at sunset to return to Paris. "Seated in the carriage," says M. Jules Favre, "we did not find a word to exchange during the whole journey; my heart was so heavy that it suffocated me. Motionless, and as it were struck down, M. Thiers gave way to his emotion. From Versailles to Paris his eyes did not cease to fill with tears. He wiped them away without saying a word, but it was easy to see from the expression of his troubled features that he was a prey to one of the most ineffable sorrows that it is given to man to feel."[1]

Alsace

Alsace had been claimed by Germany in the assignments which in 1556 followed the disruption of the Empire of Charles V. But even at this period attention had been drawn to the fact that the populations were opposed to the idea of seeing themselves reunited with the Germanic Empire. Richelieu had conquered Alsace; Louis XIV had occupied Strasburg. The wishes of the populations had attached them closely to the French unity.

Prussia recognized it herself in a Memoir addressed to the plenipotentiaries of Europe assembled in Congress at the time of the treaty of Utrecht:[2] "It is notorious, were the words used in the Memoir, that the inhabitants of Alsace are more French than the Parisians, and that the King of France is so sure of their affection to his service and his glory, that he orders them to supply guns, swords, hallebards,

[1] Jules Favre, t. iii. p. 118.

[2] Demander à Bertrand le text Billet.

pistols, powder, and lead, whenever the rumour runs that the Germans intend to cross the Rhine, and that they run in crowds to the banks of that river to prevent it, or at least to dispute the passage against the Germanic nation, to the evident peril of their own lives, as if they were going to a triumph . . . "; and the Memoir added that "if the Alsatians were separated from the King of France whom they adored, it would not be possible to rob him of their hearts with less than a chain of two hundred years." [1]

In 1815 the same claim had been raised by Prussia, equally without success.

This policy, pursued from so long ago, was realized now.

By the skill of Prince Bismarck, who had known how to put the intervention of Europe on one side with that danger of a Congress, "which disturbed him day and night," German nationality was imposed on these peoples without consulting them, and without even taking the opinion of the supreme tribunal of Europe. It was known that there had been no change in their feelings, and Bismarck said so himself in the Reichstag on the 2nd of May, 1871, while coldly examining the reasons "of the aversion of the inhabitants themselves from their separation from France." [2]

Lorraine

As for Lorraine, it was a country of race and language exclusively French. Metz had been attached to France for three centuries; nothing could have caused an anticipation that these populations would one day be detached from

[1] Lamberty, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire du xviii. siècle*, t. v. p. 282.

[2] *Speeches*, t. iii. p. 420.

a country to which they were bound by ties so dear.

France, neglectful of her traditional interests, had made herself the champion of the cause of nationalities and the independence of peoples in Europe. Thus was she rewarded. Twenty years of generous effort culminated in this result.

It is not only a question of those liberal ideals, which Bismarck lashes so cruelly in his *Reminiscences*, and to which his life is the haughty antithesis.

As a matter of fact the social order of Europe was shaken by this reactionary application of the right of the most strong.

A great and accomplished Progress effaced

A great and accomplished step in advance was effaced. Since 1870 the pupils of Bismarck having multiplied, that work of civilization upon itself, in the direction of the refinement of international morals, has been suspended.

In justice it must be recognized that Bismarck never claimed with that haughty pride, which is habitual to him when his acts are in question, even the most disputable of them, the initiative in this decision, in so far as it concerns the annexation of a part of Lorraine and of Metz; he always affirmed that he was obliged to bend to the demands of the Head Quarters Staff, and this fact appears to be proved to-day.

His judicious mind perceived the dangers of so ill-regulated a policy. Although he cherished an inveterate idea, and one not subject to reason, because it was the child of pride and passion, "that France cannot live in peace with her neighbours," he understood the injury which would be done to Germany, in the opinion of Europe and even of herself, by the act of violence,

by which she created, of *malice prepense*, an eternal cause of conflict between the two countries.

He himself indicates with much sagacity the weak point in this narrowly annexationist policy, the presence in the Empire of populations which remain foreigners to it.

But, above all, in the long meditations of a powerful mind borne towards vast conceptions and durable works, he must have reproached himself with the stigma of the provisional character which he allowed to be imposed on his work; he must have felt internal regret at having failed in a duty which had shown itself clearly to him at Versailles as at Nikolsburg, that of not allowing irreparable errors to be made.

Face to face with himself, he must have experienced some confusion at not having ventured, by way of completing his triumph, to attack the real problem, to wit, the final settlement of the great debate opened on the death of Charles the Bold; at the time when he might perhaps have assured peace to Europe and the new empire which he was founding by one of those skilful and equitable solutions which are always contained in the facts, and which a genius like his would have been able to clear.

This is not the place to pass judgment on Prince Bismarck. His powerful physiognomy exercised a kind of hypnotism on the generation of his contemporaries. His acts are but little discussed, because distance of time is still wanting to measure their results. However one can even now note that his political genius was incomplete, powerful though it was. Entirely devoted to the political game, there are some sentiments which he refused to take into account. His principal instrument was

force; his motto from the beginning was: *sanguine et ferro.*

His realism took the surrounding humanitarianism by surprise; the militarism by which he was sometimes swayed got the better of the general inclination to parliamentary institutions. He obtained successes which broke the order of ideas and sentiments dominant in Europe at the time when he lived. He acted in a revolutionary spirit. But a revolutionary in reaction, he deposited in the very heart of his work the germ of weakness inherent to works of violence, insufficiently balanced.

Prince Bismarck has often been compared with Cardinal Richelieu. The latter, refined, aristocratic, impassioned for all manifestations of human greatness, developed France in the direction of her national genius, while the other, a hard task-master to his own country, turned it aside from its path, and has, for a long time perhaps, put it out of conceit with the elevated and sentimental ideal inherent in the ancient and traditional aspirations of that noble Germanic race.

M. Thiers returns to Bordeaux

On Sunday, the 26th of February, M. Thiers signed at Versailles the treaty which was to serve as a preliminary to the definitive peace. Immediately he took the train back to Bordeaux, where the Assembly was awaiting him in a state of anxiety which it is easy to imagine. He arrived there on the 28th.

The first contact of the negotiator with the representatives of the nation took place in one of the Committees of the Assembly. We have the impressions of an eye-witness:

"What a scene, my dear friend, was that at which I have just been present. M. Thiers is a member

of my committee; he came there on leaving the train, without even going to his house, in order to report to us on his painful negotiations. We had been waiting for him in a sitting of the committees for nearly an hour. Nothing can picture the greatness, the pain of this story which forced tears from us; and what eloquence there was in the spectacle of this old man, who had taken no rest for three days and three nights, after contests with Bismarck and the King of Prussia which lasted for ten consecutive hours. Alas! the sacrifices surpass everybody's expectations! . . ."[1]

At a public session, M. Thiers himself read the preamble of the treaty. Then, M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire read the terms of the Convention. Each of the articles fell like a sentence of death upon the assembled representatives of the people. They were prepared for anything. Some, remembering 1806, feared that Germany might demand still more important sacrifices of money, might confiscate our fleet of war or endeavour to limit the military strength of France. The announcement of the annexation of a part of Lorraine, of Metz, and of Alsace prevoked an indescribable burst of emotion: "We are in the position of a sick man who is going to be operated on," writes the Deputy Marshal Delpit in his *Journal*. "A brave soldier seated beside me shows me his mutilated hand, saying to me: 'Sir, I suffered less when these three fingers were cut off. . . .'"

After a uselesss discussion on urgency, it was voted. On the following day, the 1st of March, the debate on the ratification took place. The question was clearly put: "Could the war be

[1] Marquis de Dampierre, *Cinq années de vie politique*, p. 22.

continued to any purpose, or could it not?"

M. Louis Blanc maintained the thesis of the struggle to the bitter end. He proposed to substitute guerilla warfare for the great war. And he called up the memories of the armies of the Revolution.

M. Thiers, resting on the results of the inquiry to which the Assembly had just committed itself, pointed out the impossibility of continuing the struggle. According to him, it was not France that was powerless. He had no doubt of the future of the country, no more had the enemy, to judge by the precautions which he was taking against the France of to-morrow. But it was her military organization which had been destroyed since the opening of the war.

The war had had two phases. During the first, up to Sedan, war was carried on with skeleton lists, without soldiers so to speak. Seeing that it was impossible to bring up the effective of the regiments from 1,000 to 3,000 men in eight days, two regiments were sent instead of one, whence penury in men, plethora in officers. What then happened? Out of 120 regiments 116 were made prisoners at Sedan or Metz. This explains the fact that during the second period of the war after the 4th of September we fought with insufficient staffs. M. Thiers saw in that the cause of the persistence of our reverses. And he added that armies are not to be improvised. "The Revolution itself," said he, "which is so often quoted, did not improvise them; it fought a first war under a superior man whom a happy chance had placed at its disposal, General Dumouriez, who was in command of the Royal Army. It was with this army that the Revolution won its first

victories. Later on, it had a long period of reverses, till the time came when it was able to create real armies."

A violent incident marked the course of the discussion. M. Bamberger, Deputy of the Moselle, was developing at the tribune the protest of the Alsatians against the treaty, and was saying that one single man, Napoleon III, ought to sign it, when M. Galloni d'Istria, interrupted him with these words: "Napoleon III would never have signed a disgraceful treaty!"

M. Conti, a Bonapartist deputy from Corsica, tried to take up the defence of the Empire, and only succeeded in letting loose the parliamentary tumult. Calm was re-established after the vote of the following resolution:

The Fall of the Empire

"The National Assembly closes the incident, and under the painful circumstances, through which our country is passing, in the face of unexpected protestations and reservations, confirms the fall of Napoleon III and his dynasty already pronounced by universal suffrage, and declares him responsible for the ruin, the invasion, and the disruption of France."

At the end of the discussion, M. Thiers was obliged to intervene in order to beg the Assembly not to allow itself to be diverted from its painful duties. "No, no," he cried, "France did not wish for the war. It is you who are protesting, you wished for it. . . . Truth rises up before you to-day, and it is a punishment from heaven to see you here, obliged to submit to the judgment of the nation, which will be the judgment of posterity. . . ." MM. Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, in the name of the Republican party, Bamberger, Keller, Tachar, in

the name of the populations threatened with annexation, spoke against the motion.

Finally the Assembly voted the ratification of the preliminaries by 546 votes to 107 and 23 abstentions.

The Protest of Alsace-Lorraine

When the Assembly had thus given its consent to the sacrifices, which necessity imposed upon the nation, a pathetic scene occurred. M. Grosjean arose; he placed upon the tribune the resignation and the protest of his colleagues from the conquered provinces: "Handed over in contempt of all justice and by a hateful abuse of force to the domination of the foreigner, we declare, once again, null and of no effect a compact which disposes of us without our consent. Your brothers of Alsace-Lorraine, separated at this moment from the common family, will preserve a loyal affection for France, though absent from their hearths, till the day when she shall come to resume her place there. . . ." M. Grosjean and his colleagues left the hall of session. Will such scenes, the lessons which they carry, and the duties which they impose, ever be effaced from the memory of the nation?

A certain number of members of the Republican party, notably MM. Rochefort, Ranc, Benoît Malon, Félix Pyat, also sent in their resignations, declaring that they would not sit one single day longer "in an assembly which had surrendered two provinces, dismembered France and ruined the country."

Ratification of the Preliminaries

The text of the deliberation and the documents necessary for the exchange of ratifications were rapidly drawn up and sent in all haste to Paris. The Government pushed on the work in order to render the occupation of a part of Paris by the German troops as short as possible.

The exchange of ratifications took place on the 2nd of March at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Bismarck was taken by surprise. He carefully examined the instrument of ratification, and minutely weighed all its terms. He had reckoned on a long deliberation of the National Assembly and the German army had made arrangements in consequence for the occupation of Paris. The Emperor had fixed Friday, the 3rd of March, for his triumphal entry. He had to give up this proud satisfaction. The different army corps were to have succeeded one another in the capital of France in groups of thirty thousand men. The first group alone could penetrate. On the following day at eight o'clock in the morning Paris was freed from the presence of the enemy.

V

The Place of Session of the Assembly

Meanwhile there still remained one duty to be fulfilled by the Assembly of Bordeaux. It had to fix the town in which it would hold its sessions in future, and which would become in virtue of that fact the political capital of France. The war finished, Paris open, it was necessary to settle this question.

Should the Assembly go and sit at Paris? And if it remained in the Provinces, at which distance from Paris should it establish itself, and in what town? Even in the periods of the greatest agitation Governments and Assemblies have remained faithful to Paris. France is in fact really governed from thence. France is only complete in the union of Paris with the Provinces. But after the circumstances which had just been gone through, would the great city, still convulsed by the passions

and the sufferings of the siege, be sufficiently mistress of herself and of her nerves to surround the Assembly with the calm necessary to its deliberations?

The Assembly did not think so.

Want of Harmony between the Provinces and Paris

For the first time, and perhaps for the only time, there was a profound discord between the Provinces and Paris. The kind of dissociation produced by the length of the siege translated itself at once into a sentiment and a theory. The majority of the Assembly experienced the sentiment keenly; in it there was at once mistrust and apprehension, and the Assembly was ready to apply the theory by a kind of judicial sentence aimed at Paris.

Paris had made the Revolution of the 4th of September and formed the Government of National Defence out of its own representatives; the Assembly held this Government in detestation. By the heroism of her resistance Paris had prolonged the conflict, after the capitulation she was still a partisan of the war to the bitter end; the Assembly wanted immediate peace. Paris had voted for the Radicals; the Assembly was composed in the majority of Legitimists and Orleanists. "Paris sends us ready-made revolutions by wire every fifteen years," was said by a deputy, and a young Socialist, Gaston Crémieux, had replied from the top of the public platforms with this cry: "Down with the country-folk!"

The Assembly and the Paris deputies.

On the 12th of February, the day on which the Socialists elected at Paris arrived, MM. Rochefort, Delescluze, Tridon, Malon, Millière, Pyat, M. Fresneau, a Legitimist deputy from the Morbihan, had gone to the tribune to point out to the indignation of the Assembly "col-

leagues notoriously stained with the blood of the civil wars."

The deputies of the Right were surprised to encounter in the lobbies some of those men who had taken part in the "days" of the siege, and still had in their eyes the fever of the long days of conflict, and the wrath which they cherished, especially against the men of the 4th of September.

The crowd used to press upon the deputies, as they passed; it welcomed the Monarchists with hostile shouts, and lavished its sympathies upon the Republicans. The National Guard, it is said, took part in these manifestations.

On the complaint of the Marquis de Franclieu, the provisional president, M. Benoist d'Azy gave orders for military measures, which called forth the protests of M. Rochefort, a deputy for Paris.

Garibaldi, who also had been elected by Paris, had repaired to the Assembly. Astonishment was felt at his presence in the hall of the sitting. After the President had read his letter of resignation, he asked leave to speak. There was shouting. The old fighter immediately left Bordeaux for Caprera. Victor Hugo having wished to take up the defence of Garibaldi was equally badly received. He too sent in his resignation.

Another Parisian deputy, Colonel Langlois, hardly recovered from a wound received at Bézenval, had been taken to task while at the tribune, and while he protested against the distinction made by M. Félix Voison between the army and the National Guard. All these incidents kept up in the Assembly hidden anger against the capital.

M. Thiers did not believe the insurrection to be so near. He had confidence, blind for the matter

of that, but perfectly genuine, in the National Guard. However, not having at his disposal either an army or police force, and feeling his responsibility, he hesitated to recommend the return to Paris. On the 4th of March he proposed simply, in order to open the discussion, the transference of the Assembly "to a town nearer Paris." The discussion opened on the 10th of March.

The cause of Paris was ably defended by MM. Louis Blanc, Silva, and Millière. M. Louis Blanc, in the form of a solemn warning, announced that the vote which deprived Paris of her rank as capital would provoke a civil war: "It would be driving Paris to give herself a Government of her own, a Government against which the Assembly, *if in session elsewhere*, would be able to effect nothing . . . it would be perhaps to call from the ashes of the horrible war with the foreigner a still more horrible civil war. . . ."

On the other side violent indictments against the Capital were pronounced by MM. Fresneau, de Belcastel and Giraud on the Right. For these fiery orators Paris is the "headquarters of organized sedition, the capital of revolutionary ideas." Speaking of "the periodical violation of the great Assemblies," they affirmed that in taking its seat "on the pavement of insurrection" the National Assembly would have lost the "security and liberty of its deliberations." There is a phrase which was uttered and repeated: "They were afraid of Paris."

M. Thiers, in the speech which he made, concluded in favour of Versailles. He has said that strategical reasons determined him. He wished to have the whole army at his disposition under his hand in case of serious events at Paris. The Commission

demanded Fontainebleau and the ultras did not want to go further than Bourges.

On a division Paris was rejected by 427 to 154 and Versailles adopted. "Fontainebleau," wrote M. Jules Simon, "was a piece of folly; Bourges, a treason; Versailles, an expedient."[1] The Right of the Assembly cherished a hidden thought that the monarchical restoration would be possible at Versailles and not at Paris.

The Transference to Versailles

M. Thiers having made this a constitutional question, Paris ceased legally to be the capital of France.

This session of the 10th of March was to have a still higher importance by reason of the serious debate which M. Thiers thought it his duty to raise before the Assembly in the course of this discussion: it concerned the constitutional forms under which the country was going to live.

The Constitutional Crisis

On the day on which the National Assembly had ratified the preliminaries of Versailles, it had settled the first grave difficulty for which it had been convoked: it had declared itself for peace.

Had the mandate received by the Assembly any wider purview? Was it qualified to settle the form of government? Was it constituent? The question, as we have said, declared itself in a peculiarly acute form, and in France, where the vivacity of passions, the heat of polemics, the stubbornness of parties give an importance, sometimes excessive, to political dissensions, this debate added a fresh cause of irritation to the cruel sufferings which had been bringing this unhappy country for

[1] Jules Simon, *Le Gouvernement de M. Thiers*, t. i. p. 93.

a whole year to the end of her resources in blood, in strength, in nervous power.

Misfortune willed that over and above so many other causes of wretchedness, this people had arrived at that state of mind, too unhappily justified, in which confidence is no longer felt in anybody. Delivered over to its inspirations, its instinct, it had only itself to count upon, having before it, to speak correctly, a clean slate in the matter of traditions, beliefs, illusions or prejudices.

Any of the systems of government could come into being; any ambitions give themselves a free rein; any appetites plunge into the struggle. A smart and confused general fight was evidently in preparation.

Precisely because it was conscious of this terrible situation the Assembly had no conception of cancelling its own powers. It had been elected by the country, as was to be said later, "at a time of misfortune": it had been the last resource, when the evil days had touched their worst. It was the daughter of sorrow, its apparition was the dawn of new days: it believed itself necessary.

Discussions certainly took place on the subject of the powers entrusted to the Assembly. But after all, everybody understood that the nation would refer itself to the Assembly, if that body knew how to disentangle from the crisis the elements and conditions of the new life. The delegation of power was real, if it was not formal; failing the mandate, there was assent; failing the powers, there was competence. In the eyes of the great majority of Frenchmen, the Assembly, such as it was, represented the country.

In any case there was no doubt about the question

in its own eyes. This assurance was gathered by the majority not only from the votes of the electors, but above all from its convictions, its doctrines, the faith which it held, that it was chosen to re-establish the true principles in France, and after so many accumulated catastrophes, and various errors, to lay the foundations of a good and durable system. There was enough honesty, amazement, simplicity, if one likes to say so, in the hearts of these deputies brought so sharply into the light, and placed so suddenly at the helm, to enable them to believe that they were called to save France.

Salvation lay in the Monarchy: that was their second conviction, and, further, whatever may have been their situations and personal interests, the great majority thought that the Monarchy was the "legitimate Monarchy" with the restoration of the elder branch of the Bourbons.

The ideas of Joseph de Maistre had gradually made their way. Clerical education, which had prepared the greater part of the distinguished minds of the upper and middle class, had had this effect. The hatred of usurpation, developed and irritated by the *coup d'état* of Napoleon III, and by the severities of the Imperial Government, had moved backwards, so to speak, to the days of July. For the genuine Monarchists it was a case of conscience to repair the mischief which had been wrought in 1830; all at heart deplored the hour when the seamless robe had been rent.

The restoration of the legitimate Monarchy, resting on the Catholic doctrines, eager submission to the will of the "King," such were the aspirations of the most ardent if not most numerous members of the majority.

In the long hours of seclusion and absenteeism, experience of life and its realities often being wanting, these generations had become attached to the doctrines and principles of absolute government with an untempered ardour. In these dispositions there was but one faith. In it alone would the conscience have found repose.

At Bordeaux, as soon as the first points of contact were established, these sentiments came to light. They were excited, and in some sort spurred on by contact with a portion of the representatives of Paris and the great towns. Those singular faces, those exaggerated attitudes stirred beyond the proper measure easy-going or timid men newly landed from their provinces. Fearing the anarchy, whose spectre stalked before them, they flung themselves upon the Monarchy. Soon the first attempts at a practical realization appeared. The irons were put in the fire, and nothing was waited for except the conclusion of peace to hurry on a solution which seemed easy, and was necessary, because it was salvation.

All eyes then turned to the Comte de Chambord. For the great majority of the Monarchists he was in virtue of the principle of heredity not only a pretender, but "the King."

The Comte de Chambord, born on the 29th of September, 1820, grandson of King Charles X, had come into the world eight months after the assassination of his father, the Duc de Berry. His birth had made the old stock of the Bourbons of the elder branch bud again. He was the "child of the miracle."

His life had been spent in exile. In 1830 the younger branch, the Orleans family, had substituted itself for the elder branch, and had replaced the

white cockade by the tricolour cockade; it had opposed the principles of the Revolution to those of hereditary monarchy.

In 1832 the mother of the Comte de Chambord, the Duchesse de Berry, had tried to rouse the loyal feelings of the populations of Brittany and La Vendée to vindicate the rights of her son; beaten, hunted down, she had been cruelly handled by the Government of King Louis Philippe, M. Thiers being then Minister of Home Affairs. The rupture between the two branches of the House of Bourbon was complete. On the death of Charles X the Court of France had not gone into mourning.

After 1848 Louis Philippe had said, in his old age, to his intimate friends, who were by way of interposing to bring about a reconciliation between the two royal families equally in exile: "This reconciliation will never take place, because on the other side none of those things, which will be necessary to make it possible, will ever be done."

Henri-Charles-Marie-Ferdinand-Dieudonné d'Artois, known at first under the name of Duc de Bordeaux, who had become heir to the rights of the House of France in consequence of the abdication of Charles X and the withdrawal of his uncle the Duc d'Angoulême, had taken the name of Comte de Chambord, this estate having been given him in 1821 by national subscription. Since the month of August 1830 he had lived in exile, at first in Scotland, then in Germany, Austria, Italy. His vagrant destiny had somewhat effaced his physiognomy, if not his memory, in the recollection of most Frenchmen. By the wish of the old king, Charles X, his education had been confided to illustrious and pious hands; the Duc de Montmorency, Marquis de Rivière, Baron

de Damas, and General de la Tour Maubourg, had succeeded one another in attendance upon him He had also received lessons from the two Jesuit Fathers Deplace and Druilhet; lastly those of the Bishop of Hermopolis, Mgr. Frayssinous; a more intimate preceptor, the Abbé Trebecquet, had long held his soul; a faithful servant, the Duc de Lévis had remained with him as counsellor and mentor. He had been directed, formed, brought up by religion.

He had natural gifts: well set up, though of the somewhat full figure, which was common with the Bourbons, he had an agreeable face, a calm and straightforward glance, a delicate nose, fair beard and hair, slightly waved. The general impression was one of dignity and gentleness; but the eye was quick and penetrating. In consequence of a riding accident, which happened in 1841, he limped slightly.

It is difficult to pass judgment upon the worth of a Prince called by his birth to play a great part, but who never reigned: this simple statement is perhaps in itself a judgment. One of his teachers, who was also a friend, depicted him thus at the time when he was just emerging from adolescence: "Of a fervid, quick, sagacious mind, he judges with a shrewdness far beyond his age; at many times impatient of further study or work, he then shows himself proud, intractable, obstinate, but always of an elevated and polished mind. He is as grateful to those who check him with reason, as cold and passionate with flatterers. Lastly, he is as quick to repair as to commit a fault." Eventually he lost something of this vivacity, this irritability, which was observed in him. He appears rather to be reserved, wavering, suspicious. On the other hand the obstinacy remained. He is a man of one idea;

and that idea has so much the more strength in him that it is bound up with a powerful system: the Catholic religion. On the whole the Comte de Chambord appears as a prince of real merit, and a perfectly honourable man.

His mind is straightforward, cultivated, but without much pliancy or width: there again a Bourbon, more, it is true, of the line of Louis XIII and Louis XIV than of Henri IV. When he relaxes, his conversation has charm and even brilliancy. But he often shrouds himself in a mistrustful silence: he said sometimes, that the greatest of the French Kings was Louis XI. He is not tormented by the need of action. He writes willingly: his letters are noble and beautiful: the whole of him is revealed in those words which he addressed in 1848 to a French Republican who came to visit him at Frohsdorff:

"He told me that he would embark on no enterprise against the established powers, that he did not wish to take any initiative, and had no personal ambition; that he considered himself, in fact, the principle of order and stability, that he intended to maintain this principle intact, if it were only for the sake of the future repose of France; that in this principle lay his whole strength, that he had no other; that he would always have enough to fulfil his duty whatever it might be, and that, for the rest, God would aid him." Such as he was in 1848 at twenty-eight years of age, such he remained to the end.

At Frohsdorff he led the simplest life, given up to study, sport, works of religion and charity, living in the closest intimacy with his wife, Marie-Thérèse-Béatrix-Gaïetane, eldest daughter of the Duke of Modena, a refined physiognomy. Dry, angular,

with straight hair, she had retained from her early education on the knees of the daughter of Marie Antoinette, Madame Royale, a kind of instinctive apprehension with regard to France. Headstrong, deaf, she exercised her authority over her narrow circle, and watched jealously over the person and repose of the Prince. The marriage produced no children.

We must return once again to the dominant ideal which supported the long days of an exile at once patient and proud: it was the religious ideal. In that we have everything. The Comte de Chambord gave himself to God; in a mystical exaltation he received from the hands of the Virgin the scapulary which was never to quit him. Faith questions not. She accepts dogmas with all their consequences; if this gentle, grave man had any strong aversion, it was for those men who, placed close to the tabernacle, veil its splendours, and impoverish its rays, those "liberal catholics," those "skilful men whose skill is employed in creating difficulties and not in solving them," those "sly fellows" who, instead of keeping to the simplicity of the principle, complicate it with vain subtleties in order to give themselves the merit of simplification.[1]

His political faith was the same as his religious faith. In it and by it he waited for the work of God. There was, perhaps, some indolence in this attitude; but there was also a latent, indomitable will; there was the conviction that the descendant of the Bourbons was the representative of a principle upon earth, almost of a dogma; there was an absolute and almost resigned confidence in

[1] This evidently points to Mgr. Dupanloup. See Saint Albin, *Histoire de Henri V*, pp. 370, 371.

the strength of this principle, with a kind of standing animosity against those who, being its natural defenders and guardians, denied it, or, worse still, changed.

The Comte de Chambord, disposing of a majority in the majority, having well in hand by the organization of his "agency" the direction of a party which felt itself strong in its principles and in the support of the clergy, awaited with confidence and dignity the march of events. He also awaited, in the same reserved and cold attitude, the first steps of his cousins the princes of Orleans.

These bestowed their pains above all on not allowing themselves to sink into oblivion. While the Comte de Paris remained in London, where he received the discreet homage of personages attached to the fortunes of the family, two of his uncles had come forward at the elections, and had been elected, the Duc d'Aumale in the Oise, and the Prince de Joinville in the Haute-Marne and the Manche.

The thought which had dictated this conduct was evidently to keep the other parties, and above all the Legitimist party, in a condition of bated breath, if not of alarm.

The Duc d'Aumale, in his profession of faith to the electors of the Oise, had made declarations which had given the purists of the Right some cause for reflection: "In my own sentiments, in my past, in the traditions of my family, he had said, I find nothing which severs me from the Republic. If it is under this form that France wishes definitively to constitute her government, I am ready to bow before her sovereignty . . ." *Constitutional Monarchy or "Liberal Republic,"* he further said, "it is by political

honesty, patience, the spirit of concord, abnegation that France can be saved."

The formulas were skilful, and the tactics disturbing.

Among the Legitimists the men of most judgment had not thought that it was wise to let the situation become envenomed. Although this party was the most numerous in the Right, it had not the majority in the Assembly by itself alone. Since the paths of a parliamentary restoration were being entered upon, it was necessary to coax votes which, when the hour came, would be indispensable. Thus they were led to open secretly, and under the sleeve, the first negotiations for the *fusion*.

Neither thing nor name was new. Already in 1853 tentatives had been made upon the Comte de Chambord. He had shown himself inclined to welcome his cousins with good will; it did not displease him to see them perform the act of submission. But the Duchess of Orleans had shown little forwardness. She intended to conform to the directions of her husband, who had declared in his will "that the Comte de Paris must remain the passionate and exclusive servant of the Revolution." Thus there was a question of reconciling not only persons, but principles. In 1857 the question of the flag had been raised, and since then the Comte de Chambord had taken an attitude which could hardly leave any illusions to clear-seeing minds: "As I have never ceased to say," he wrote to the Duc de Nemours, February 5, 1857, "so I have always believed, and I still believe in the impropriety of settling from to-day, and before the moment when Providence should impose the duty upon me, questions which will

solve the interests and the prayers of our fatherland. It is not at a distance from France, and without France that arrangements can be made for her."

That meant to say that the elder branch, dethroned by the younger branch, did not permit the latter, in exile, to dictate conditions. Among the Orleans princes the most clear-sighted, such as the Duc d'Aumale, understood him in this sense, and they were not far removed from thinking, on their side, that there was nothing to be made of the Comte de Chambord. Things had remained at the same point up to the 4th of September, 1870. But as soon as the Assembly had met, active men had set themselves to work upon the web interrupted since 1857. Each of the two monarchical parties had appointed five deputies to examine in common the conditions of union between Legitimists and Orleanists. Mgr. Dupanloup was chosen to preside over this kind of extra-parliamentary committee.

During the war the Prince de Joinville had been the guest of the Bishop of Orleans. The latter said to him: "An Orleanist restoration: a new adventure with eternal hatreds. In a word, this country wants stability and grandeur." In the course of the conversations which he had had with M. Thiers towards the end of October for negotiations for an armistice, Bismarck had said, as indeed he was to repeat to Cardinal Bonnechose, that he would not view with a hostile eye a "Bourbon" solution uniting the partisans of the Comte de Chambord with those of the Comte de Paris. He had alluded to a letter from the Bishop of Orleans written in this sense, which had been transmitted through him, and which he had been able to read. The Bishop of Orleans had scarcely arrived at Bordeaux, when he

wrote again in the same sense to the Prince de Joinville : " A monarchy which would leave the House of Bourbon divided would perpetuate, along with the pain of that sad spectacle, the division of the great Conservative party, and the deep-seated evil of France. . . . No ! Give us a House of Bourbon, respecting in itself and not violating by personal rivalries, the principle which it represents," and the humanist bishop completed his eloquent objurgations by a quotation borrowed from Horace :

> O navis, referent in mare te novi
> Fluctus ! . . . Fortiter occupa
> Portum ! [1]

The Princes of Orleans asked for nothing better than to hear this language and to come into line with this advice. They had the forces of principle against them. Further, the composition of the Assembly removed every chance of immediate success from the Comte de Paris, since in the Monarchist party the Legitimist Right was the stronger, and in consequence master of the decisive vote. Meanwhile, they intended to make their conditions, if not for the present, at least for the future. And to that end they manoeuvred skilfully, keeping themselves closer to opinion and to the country than was possible for the stubborn quality of the Comte de Chambord.

But even to sustain effectively these entirely practical tactics, they had need of the Legitimist voice. In fact, two urgent questions preoccupied them, which depended entirely on a vote of the Assembly ; that of the repeal of the laws of exile, that of the validation of the elections of the

[1] Abbé Lagrange, *Vie de Mgr. Dupanloup*, t. i. p. 225.

two Princes, the Duc d'Aumale, and the Prince de Joinville: these latter could not remain in France, and they could not sit in the Assembly; that is to say, resume contact with the country and political circles except by a double decision of the majority.

As soon as they were elected the two Princes had started for Bordeaux. But M. Thiers, who was a little left out of the account, was watching the game with a not disinterested vigilance. He had made an appeal to the patriotism of the Princes, and even given them to understand that they exposed themselves to the danger of being arrested if they tried to penetrate into the Assembly. The Princes had taken the warning to heart. They had only crossed France and had pushed on to Biarritz.[1]

There the emissaries of the "political" Right had come to find them, and especially General Ducrot. Between the two factions of the majority a definite negotiation had been rapidly formed, and after some twinges, an understanding had been established, and a parliamentary plan of campaign upon the following basis: 1. Repeal of the laws of exile; 2. Validation of the Princes; 3. Visit of the Comte de Paris to the Comte de Chambord.

The Princes of Orleans had accepted this programme. Already the Duc d'Aumale had sent to the Duc Decazes a declaration of the Comte de Paris with a commission to communicate it to the deputies of the Right; it was in these terms:

February, 1871.

What will be done in France and by the representatives of France will be well done. Whatever should be attempted outside them would be premature and barren.

[1] Ernest Daudet, *Le Duc d'Aumale*, p. 204.

I have no thought of personal ambition. I will work loyally for the solution which shall seem to be about to ensure to France most securely the free, stable, and honourable government which she needs.

If a political agreement is made, all the stipulations ought to bear upon the constitution. The important thing is to obtain a surplus to win a triumph for the clauses which guarantee us a liberal constitution.

Questions of persons cannot be the object of any conditions. The idea of stipulating for an abdication is inadmissible. We must reject it absolutely.

We must be firm only on the questions of principle, and not upon the questions of persons.

M. Estancelin further obtained from the Duc d'Aumale a written declaration addressed to Mgr. Dupanloup by which he affirmed that neither he nor any Prince of Orleans would raise any obstacle to the re-establishment of the Legitimate Monarchy.

The conditions of the understanding were sealed at Biarritz. The completion of the agreement was deferred to a further meeting fixed at Dreux for the end of March.

The understanding seemed to be settled. The Comte de Chambord could not refuse a crown which offered itself to him. He would embrace with joy in the persons of the Princes of Orleans, subjected and even a little humiliated, heirs to whom a throne would be secured by this proceeding. On both sides 1830 would be forgotten. France was well worth these mutual concessions. The monarchical system was then to resume all its splendour by the restoration of the House of Bourbon. Optimists no longer doubted of success: the disappointed themselves suspended their judgment.

At the moment when the Right left Bordeaux

for Versailles, it fully believed that it was approaching a solution in coming to occupy the palace of the "Grand Monarque."

However, M. Thiers had to be reckoned with. His conduct seemed to be obscure. The persistence with which he had insisted on adding the words "of the French Republic" to the title of "Head of the Executive Power," was not much liked.

He was harassed with questions, and even brought up sharp by the Royalist party. The majority did not feel itself strong enough to proclaim the immediate restoration. We have already recalled the words of the Vicomte de Meaux: "The truth is that at that time nobody believed the thing to be possible, and I have always persisted in thinking," he adds, thirty years later, "that, in fact, we could not have done it then in any fashion."[1] But they would have been only too glad to bring M. Thiers to take this initiative of himself; in any case they wanted to get from him as favourable a declaration as possible, at least for the future.

M. de Falloux, who had long been associated with M. Thiers, had implored him not to disappoint his past, and his friends among the Monarchists. M. Thiers, from the very first, had entrenched himself behind a skilful formula, which reserved his

[1] In the early days of the session at Bordeaux the Right used to meet under the presidency of M. Audren de Kerdrel in the rooms of M. Journu, deputy for the Gironde. "One day M. de Belcastel having wished to speak of the chances of the return of the Legitimate Monarchy with the frankness which was the finest quality in his character and his talents, President Kerdrel stopped him short, and treated his motion as imprudent in a tone of irritation and bitterness, which seemed to me inspired by an excessive prudence at a meeting which comprised all the Legitimists in the Assembly." Baron Vinols, *Mémoires*, p. 19.

adhesion while appearing to grant it: "Yes, yes," he said, "we will create the *united* Monarchy." But feeling that, he could not do without the help of the Monarchists, and yet not wishing to tie his own hands, he had thought he must come to closer quarters with the problem.

On the 15th of February he had assembled at his house the most conspicuous members of the party, the Duc de Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia, the Marquis de Juigné, the Comte de Juigné, the Marquis de Dampierre, and he had laid his views before them.

In order to appease their demands, or calm their fears, he had expressed himself in the following terms: "I need your confidence; you must help me, in the midst of many difficulties, to start our unhappy country on the path on which I would wish to see her. At this moment we can govern only with the help of all the respectable parties; it would be perilous, it would be contrary to all the rules of common sense, to all the inspirations of patriotism, to confuse the work of repair, which we have before us, by thinking of giving power to one or the other of the parties which divide us, *and thus raising against that party the hostility of all those whose claims would thereby have suffered damage.* But it is evident for me, if we are wise, that the prudence which we are going to display must end in the *united Monarchy.* Yes, gentlemen, in the united Monarchy, you understand, and not any other."

These gentlemen thought it their duty to keep and retain a minute of these words; in their desire to set the restored king free from "the hostilities of all the other parties", with which M. Thiers threatened them, they accepted his declarations

as a sort of pledge in favour of Monarchy; they closed their eyes to the significance of the reservation so skilfully introduced and repeated by M. Thiers: "The *united* Monarchy, you understand, the *united* Monarchy!"

M. Thiers having thus concluded an arrangement with the Right, in which there was on both sides more resignation than confidence, had the skill to take public note of the kind of adhesion which he had known how to obtain. In the speech made on the 10th of March on the occasion of the transference of the Assembly to Versailles, he expressed himself in these terms:

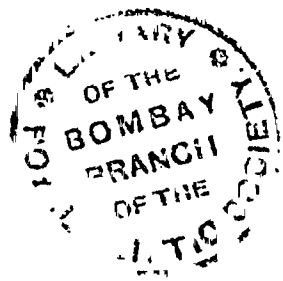
> What is my duty, mine, whom you have overwhelmed with your confidence? It is loyalty to all the parties which divide France, and which divide the Assembly. What we promise them all, is to deceive no one; not to conduct ourselves in a manner to prepare without your knowledge an exclusive solution which would force the other parties to despair. . . . We have accepted a crushing responsibility. . . . We shall concern ourselves only with the reorganization of the country. . . . When the country is reorganized we will come here and say to you: The country you entrusted to us bleeding, covered with wounds, hardly alive, we restored it to you a little revived; it is the time to give it its definite form; and I give you the word of an honest man, none of the questions which will have been deferred will have been altered by any disloyalty on our part.

This is what was called the Bordeaux compact. If we complete it by the conversation of the 15th of February, of which the notes have been scrupulously preserved for us, we see that M. Thiers discounted the assistance of the Monarchist Right in the enterprise of re-organization upon which he embarked, but that, on the other hand, he left it time to try to realize that *union* between the two branches of the dynasty, which he considered a *sine quâ non* of success. In

this attitude of M. Thiers there was at once skill, wisdom, and not a little irony. It was a game of diamond cut diamond. But in this game the Right ran a risk of being beaten by the astute old man.

The National Assembly held its last sitting at Bordeaux on the 11th of March, and decided to re-assemble on the 20th of March at Versailles.

M. Thiers betook himself to Paris, where he arrived on the 15th of March.



CHAPTER III

THE COMMUNE

The Causes of the Insurrection of the 18th of March—The Revolutionary Parties and the Army of Disorder—The Central Committee and the International—The Prussians in Paris—The 18th of March—Retreat of the Government to Versailles—Vain Efforts at Conciliation—The Paris Elections, March 26—In the Provinces and Algeria—The National Assembly and the Commune—M. Thiers declares for the Republic—The Versailles Army—The Second Siege of Paris—The Affairs of April 3 and 4—The Commune tries to organize itself—Its Programme—The Committee of Public Safety—Forts Issy and Vanves taken—Entrance of the Troops into Paris, May 21—The Battle in the Streets—The Conflagrations—Execution of Hostages—Suppression of the Commune.[1]

Paris after the Armistice

PARIS, after the signature of the armistice, had been, so to say, abandoned to herself. The rulers, the deputies, the influential men, everybody had left her; only M. Jules Favre, M. E. Picard and M. Jules Ferry, Mayor of Paris, had remained, but how much neglected, how unpopular! They left

[1] Principaux ouvrages consultés: *Enquête parlementaire sur l'insurrection du* 18 *mars* 1871, 3 vol. in-4° (publication de l'Assembleé nationale; Général Appert, *Rapport d'ensemble sur les opérations de la Justice militaire, relatives à l'insurrection de* 1871, 1 vol. in-4° (publication de l'Assemblée nationale); Arthur Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune de*

the direction of affairs to General Vinoy, appointed commander-in-chief of the army of Paris, and to General d'Aurelle de Paladines, chief commander of the National Guards of the Seine. This last has passed a severe judgment upon the sittings of the Council, which were held every evening during this period: "Often," he says, "it was eleven o'clock, and the members of the Council had not yet arrived. A word was given to public business, affairs of State, etc., the rest of the time was buffoonery, jokes made by M. Ernest Picard, which were sometimes answered."[1] Paris was waiting for orders and news from the provinces: Paris who had been in the habit of starting impulses!

Although the girdle of her walls was open, she remained isolated and derelict. The separation

Paris, Bruxelles, 1878, 3 vol. in-18; Beslay, *Mes Souvenirs*, Paris, 1873, 1 vol. in-18, et *La vérité sur la Commune*, Bruxelles, 1877, 1 vol. in-18; Maxime du Camp, *Les convulsions de Paris*, Paris, 1878, 4 vol. in-8°; Cluseret, *Mémoires*, 3 vol. in-18; Paul Chasteau, *Recueil des dépêches françaises officielles du* 16 *février au* 27 *mai* 1871, Paris, 1871, 1 vol. in-12; Jules Favre, *Histoire du Gouvernement de la Défense nationale*, Paris, 1871, 3 vol. in-8°; Louis Fiaux, *Histoire de la guerre civile de* 1871, Paris, 1879, 1 vol. in-8°; Fr. Jourde, *Souvenirs d'un membre de la Commune*, Bruxelles, 1877, 1 vol. in-8°; *Journal officiel de la Commune* (réimpression), 1 vol. in-4°; Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste à Paris en* 1871, Neuchâtel, 1871, 1 vol. in-16; Lissagaray, *Histoire de la Commune de* 1871, Bruxelles, 1876, 1 vol. in-16; Maréchal de Mac-Mahon, *L'armée de Versailles depuis sa formation jusqu'à la complète pacification de Paris* (rapport officiel); Camille Pelletan, *La Semaine de Mai*, Paris, 1880, 1 vol. in-16; V. Rossel, *Papiers posthumes*, Paris, 1871, 1 vol. in-8°; Jules Simon, *Le gouvernement de M. Thiers*, Paris, 1878, 2 vol. in-8°; Général Vinoy, *L'Armistice et la Commune*, Paris, 1872, 1 vol. in-8° avec atlas.

[1] *Enquête parlementaire sur le* 18 *mars*, déposition du Général d'Aurelle de Paladines.

produced by the siege took her by surprise; she was, as it were, in the void. Even before the Assembly at Bordeaux had pronounced upon her fate, the great city felt herself "decapitalized."

In the eyes of Paris the Assembly bore the burden of this first responsibility. That is not all; not only did the Assembly despoil the great city of authority, but it tore away her halo. Paris had done her duty; she had created her legend; she had struggled for five months; she had suffered; she had capitulated only when compelled by famine, and with fury in her heart: and all these efforts were reckoned of no account. The vote which decided to transfer the capital to Versailles aggravated a situation already strained. There was not an inhabitant of Paris, not an owner of property, not a tradesman, not an artizan, who was not hit by this decision in his interests and in the opinion which he held of himself.

Over the wide extent of a city so enormous as Paris, the normal life, when suspended for long months, is not easily resumed. A long process of setting to work is necessary in order that all the wheels may catch on and fall into their natural play. Paris had lost the habit of work. As M. Thiers said in his deposition before the Commission of inquiry on the insurrection of the 18th of March, "Two or three thousand persons had spent several months in doing nothing or in carrying a rifle, of which they did not make over much use; they lived upon the supplies found by the municipal administration." Paris is not idle; far from it. But she lives from day to day, and in order that she might resume work, time was still wanted for work to come back to her. It must also be

admitted that from this point of view serious acts of imprudence had been committed: a decree of the 15th of February had restricted the allowance of 1 fr. 50 c. per diem to those National Guards who should prove "want of work."

The Law of Debts

On the other hand a decision of the Assembly, which declared the term of all debts, postponed for seven months, payable within forty-eight hours, put, so to say, the whole commerce of Paris in a state of bankruptcy. From the 13th to the 17th of March there were one hundred and fifty thousand protests in the city. Lastly the Assembly had refused to inquire into the question of rents unpaid since the investment. To allow the commission of such grave errors required that misunderstanding of the life of Paris to which M. Jules Favre pleads guilty in his deposition. Paris was well worth the trouble of attending to her difficulties, her sufferings, her morrow.[1]

It is only just to remark that it was not merely considerations of private interest which raised the excitement. The news which had arrived from Bordeaux, and which, exaggerated by the distance gradually provoked the universal cry, was, first, that the Republic was threatened, and, secondly, that the Prussians would enter Paris. Such were the direct and immediate causes of the disturbance.

"The Republic threatened": this was the first cry of alarm, the decisive phrases repeated in conversations, confirmed in proclamations. Already, on the 10th of March, the words were placarded on

[1] "I cannot represent myself as a person who knows Paris very well." (p. 37)—M. Rouher imparts, somewhere, the same confidence with reference to himself. Both allege in explanation their too numerous occupations.

the walls of Paris, which were to become the theme of all the calls to resistance: "Soldiers, children of the people, let us unite to save the Republic. Kings and emperors have done us enough mischief. Long live the Republic!" As one of the most temperate of the historians of this epoch very justly says: "It is certain that the National Guard intended by a great majority to remain under arms for the protection of the Republic."[1] The rumours which were in circulation as to the inclinations of the Right of the Assembly added to the mistrust which had been increased by fiery polemics. For Paris, which had been returning Republicans for ten years, the Republic was a personal matter. All those men, who had read the *Histoire d'un Crime*, were resolved not to allow the accomplishment of a second *coup d'état* without resistance.

But there was another cause of emotion still more keen and more immediate: it was the emotion felt by the great city barely delivered from the siege, when she learned the clause of the preliminaries of peace, which granted the entrance of the Prussians into Paris. Let us leave the word to M. Thiers: "This entrance of the Prussians into Paris," he further says in his deposition before the Commission of inquiry, "was one of the principal causes of the insurrection. I do not say that the movement would not have taken place without this circumstance; but I maintain that this entry of the Prussians gave it an extraordinary impulse."

From this point of view the movement in truth characterizes itself as a manifestation of the con-

[1] Lefèvre, *Histoire de la ligue d'union républicaine des droits de Paris*, p. 11.

dition of minds under the influence of the siege. General Trochu, in his deposition, goes so far as to attribute a Machiavellian strategy to Prince Bismarck. "What he wanted," said the General, "was insurrection and anarchy." [1] In any case, the German Chancellor discounted the disorder in Paris; he had announced it to M. Thiers, and the clause of the peace stipulating for the entrance of the German troops into the city, to which the German negotiator clung with so singular an insistence, certainly produced the effect which it was easy to foresee.

Paris, which had been conquered by famine, would perhaps have risked complete destruction in order not to allow a hostile army to penetrate into her streets. The wise arrangement which limited the momentary occupation of Paris to the quarter of Champs-Elysées, and, above all, the haste which was made by the Assembly and the Government to exchange the ratifications, perhaps obviated a great calamity. Hence, however, came the extremity of emotion from which the insurrection sprang.

There were not wanting elements capable of rousing, irritating, and precipitating these predispositions. In this universal crisis, when certain minds at Versailles would have sought the restoration of black absolutism, other minds at Paris sought the paths of red anarchy. The diverse and confused tendencies, which agitated the country, thus reached on both sides their extremest consequences.

The Blanquist Party

In the front rank of the revolutionaries stood the figure of a party which was not

[1] *Enquête sur l'insurrection du* 18 *mars. Déposition du Général Trochu*, p. 31.

unknown to the Parisians: this was Blanquism: it might be considered the traditional party of insurrection, conspiracy, and sedition. It possessed hardly any other political conception except that of opposition to the last breath, by all means, to all governments. It was integral, republican, levelling, the adversary of social order, but neither communist, nor separatist, nor socialist: in fact, anarchist. This party counted three or four thousand adherents in Paris. It was more revolutionary than it was a disciple of the Revolution.

Jacobinism

The Revolution of tradition, Jacobinism, was represented by a group at least as numerous, and which was subdivided, according to the tendencies of its chiefs, into two equally influential sections: the Jacobins of action who followed Delescluze, and the romantic Jacobins, who followed Félix Pyat. These men were very close to those who had seized power on the 4th of September. They were partisans of the Republic "one and indivisible," of an energetic Government, hostile to the middle classes, friends of the people, but, above all, violent and autocratic. They had been in some measure frustrated by the decision, which on the 4th of September had reserved places in the Government exclusively for the Parisian deputies. It was Jacobinism which had been beaten on the 31st of October, 1870, and the 21st of January, 1871. It did not forgive the members of the Government of National Defence for the triple check which they had inflicted, and at Bordeaux it had, discounting the sentiments of the Right, claimed the indictment of the men of the 4th of September. After this manifestation, devoid of nobility and aim, the Jacobins had understood that their place was not in

the Assembly; most of those who had been elected deputies, men like Delescluze, Félix Pyat, Tridon, B. Malon, had sent in their resignations and returned to Paris, where the insurrection was already hatching. There were in them great ambitions, hidden enmities, and a cool or circumspect indignation, long repressed.

The Socialists

It was difficult for a mind not closely attentive, not to confound with the revolutionary parties, properly so called, other elements, which at that time strove to secure a considerable part, which indeed they were to play in the sequel, the Socialists. These, whether they were disciples of the numerous doctrines, Saint-Simonism, Fourierism, Communism, which had first seen the light in France in the first half of the century, or adhered to the collectivist system already born on the other side of the Rhine, had the constitution of a new order of society for their programme. They had their appointed place in every quarter where the struggle between labour and capital was in progress, and especially in strikes. Most of them were working men or were connected with the proletariat. The formidable and obscure polemics of Proudhon supplied them, if not with reasons, at least with formulas. Their prejudice with reference to the capitalist middle class did not always put them on their guard against the skilful and dangerous flattery of the publicists of the advanced guard and the orators of public meetings.

The International

The working men's party was united by a thousand ties with a vast cosmopolitan organization, the International. The delegated French workmen had been brought into relations with it in London at the time of the exhibition of 1862.

Founded, it is said, under the auspices of Carl Marx, it had its seat in England, it had extensive relations in Germany, perhaps with the surroundings of Bismarck, who neglected no means.[1] Warmly welcomed in France by the Liberal party, having an apologist at the outset in the person of Henri Martin and an advocate in Jules Ferry, it had developed during the last years of the Empire; perhaps the Imperial Government had bethought itself of resting on the support of this organization of the democracy to oppose the Liberal middle class. Perhaps, too, the mystery which reigned over the deeds and actions of the International added to the suppositions and suspicions.

It was said to be rich and powerful. It does not seem to be questionable that it reckoned from seventy to eighty thousand affiliated members at Paris in 1870. According to its own minutes, it seemed somewhat poor and at a loss on the eve of the 18th of March. The directing committee often changed the place of its sittings; however, in these latter days it used to meet in a locality which became famous, No. 6, Place de la Corderie. The funds were in the hands of a certain Chatelain living in the Rue St. Honoré who passed for a Bonapartist agent. It was to play a preponderant part in the union of all the revolutionary parties, and in the organization of the "Central Committee."

All these elements were at first isolated. Often they suspected one another. They grouped themselves by the conflict and for the conflict without at first concerning themselves to clear up with pre-

[1] Déposition de M. Choppin.

cision the theory of their common action. Little by little, however, the majority rallied with a more or less clear understanding, a more or less ardent conviction to an idea which was elaborated in some sort by the scale and measure of events, and became the programme of the insurrection and the posthumous word of command, "the communalistic ideal."

The Commune

If this doctrine is considered in its essence, it is seen to be the absolute application of the thought of Jean Jacques Rousseau: to go to the bottom of things, it is nothing but the *Swiss* conception of the political organization of societies.

In fact in this system the body social has the *Commune* for its molecule and *federation* for its outcome. In principle all representation is suppressed. Power is brought near to the people so that the people may govern and itself carry on its own affairs. And that is why the system encloses, as far as possible, the political organism within the narrow limits of the Commune. "The mischief is not that the State acts in the name of such or such a principle, but that it exists."[1]

The Commune then is seen as the primordial and almost unique social machine; for acting freely and outside the influence of other communes, each commune will live its own life and will infallibly keep separate. One discovers crossing these ideas a vague reminiscence of the small republics of antiquity, in which the people governs upon the public market place, of the Italian republics, of the

[1] Arthur Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune*, t. iii. p. 117.

Flemish communes, and, above all, of the Helvetian cantons. The doctrine of Jean Jacques was made up of all these elements. He declared, by way of a hint, that his "Social Contract" ended in "Confederation." His unconscious disciples received through him the lesson which he had himself borrowed from the country of his birth.[1]

Meanwhile they added to the system a new conception: that of the social Revolution. Power being exercised in each commune directly by the people, the people will itself manage its own business by making wealth, resources, labour, collective. The new organization of society will be the natural consequence of the new organization of the city. Such was the infallible outcome of the communal system.

But to arrive at this result, it was necessary before all things to break up national unity. "Whatever you may do, *Unity* is *Centralization*, and *Centralization* spells *Authority*. Change the ticket, and you always have despotism. The formula of the party

[1] *Contrat Social*, edit. Dreyfus Brissac, p. 407 *et seq.*

Here are some extracts from the first edition of the *Contrat Social*: "A fundamental rule for every well-constituted and legitimately governed society would be, *that it should be possible easily to assemble all its members*, whenever it was necessary. It follows from this *that the State should be limited to one single town at the most*. . . . Since all small states, whether republics or monarchies, prosper only from this, that they are small." And again: "Apply yourselves to extending and perfecting the system of federative governments, the only one which combines the advantages of large and small states." There is something to be gained, on the subject of the origin of the ideas of Jean-Jacques, from a curious work of M. Jules Vuz: *Origine des idées politiques de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Genève, 1889. See also H. Fazy, *La Constitution de la République de Genève*. Genève, Georg, 1890.

is, to sum up, epitomized in these three terms: communal autonomy, federation, collectivism." The object then was, as in the time of the Ligue, to make a Switzerland of France, but a socialised Switzerland.

This doctrine, once again, only appeared very late in the day. It was evolved from the positions already taken up. It was given definition, when too late, by theorists at leisure amid the reflections of exile; but it had been in the depths of their minds; it silently inspired the deeds, the words, and the actions. It was natural that in a crisis such as that through which France was passing, a glimpse was caught of the absolute disassociation and the complete dislocation of the country, as the ultimate outcome.

The theories, by very reason of their formidably abstract character and their complexity, escaped the masses, tossed about by events, a prey to that enthusiastic and bloody fever which brooded over the great city in her abandonment, her humiliation, her despair.

These *masses*, throwing their weight on one side only, provoked the catastrophe, and therefore they must be depicted; to begin with, the population itself of all classes, of all categories, which had just suffered the horrors of the siege, which had been kept for long months separated from the world, and, as it were, sequestrated, finding itself again free, issuing from its cell, as has been said, marching dazzled in space, deceived for so long by the error in which it had been beguiled as to the efficiency of the struggle, the certainty of the victory, after having made a dream of glory and of heroism, finding itself face to face with all the defeats, all the humiliations,

fell, as has again been said, from the Empyrean on to the earth.[1]

The virile element had seen firing. All the men were soldiers; rifles had been put into their hands; it was not their fault if, in the bitterly ironical words of M. Thiers, they had hardly used them.

The siege was scarcely completed when this population fell apart; the embryonic organization which had been, for better or worse, sketched in during the siege, broke up; no more sections, no more service, no more battalions; the rich portion of the national guard, perhaps 150,000 men, went off to join their families scattered in the provinces; the poor, the "trente sous," remained in Paris, inactive, without orders, without duty, without occupation, not knowing how to employ their days, passing from the public-houses to the clubs, wandering in the streets and public squares, no longer holding on to anything but the uniform and the rifle, which gave them countenance and ensured them bread.

The troops of the active army, the regiments of mobiles, suddenly dismissed, disarmed, in virtue even of the clauses of the capitulation, threw upon the streets 250,000 soldiers and officers, without counting 40,000 men in the hospitals. Here then were 300,000 young fellows without homes, and for the most part without resources, abandoned to themselves from one day to another, after having suffered so much, in this great empty city. It is true that both the possible and the impossible were done to get them back to their homes collectively. The Governor of Paris exhausted his strength in the attempt.

[1] Depositions of Marshal MacMahon and M. Jules Ferry.

But the means were wanting. All the trains were under requisition ; herds of thirty or forty thousand disarmed men were got together, to whom a little money was distributed to prevail on them to depart. However, they were free after all, and the residue in itself formed a band which, by its vagrant disorders, would be enough to put everything in danger.

At the same time an influx in the opposite direction came upon Paris from the provinces. The marching regiments, mobile or territorial regiments, even those of the active army, were dismissed or saw their staffs thinned when once peace was made. The Parisians who had been set free returned to the city. By the arrangements of the railways, Paris is the meeting-place necessary to the whole circulation, which was working simultaneously over the whole surface of the country in a condition of terrible disorder. The disarmed marching troops took part, without perhaps being aware of it, in the first movements of the insurrection. Nobody could find either his place or his road. For everybody the madness of the siege was doubled by a universal sense of being lost.

There were, however, those who knew what they were coming to do. Mysterious instructions summoned them to Paris. From the east notably arrived in bands the fragments of the army of Garibaldi, red-shirted men with a peacock plume at the back of their heads who seemed to be obeying a word of command and who came into the city with an air of decision, as though into a conquered country.[1]

[1] Deposition of M. Choppin, provisional delegate at the head police office after the resignation of M. Cresson and before the appointment of General Valentin.

The lowest Levels

And beneath all was a nameless collection. During the ups and downs of the siege the prisons had on several occasions been opened. Escaped felons, returned convicts, everything that lives in the lairs of a great city like Paris, the whole of that population had rediscovered itself during the long months of the siege under the incognito of the uniform.

Rifles had been given out without control. Flourens had bought chassepots, perhaps with his own funds, and had in any case issued them on his own authority. It is affirmed that there were twelve thousand returned convicts on the lists of the national guard. The failures, the debtors, bohemians, upper or lower flash mob, the whole of this rabble was there, faithful to the orders of disorder, rallied to the pay of thirty sous. These were the "national guards" who refused to fight during the siege, affirming that the intention was to send them out in order to deliver them over to the Prussians by treachery. These were the same men, too, who shouted the loudest, and who were called by the sailors the "bitter enders." They were all there, from Paris, from the provinces, and from other countries: English, Poles, Hungarians, Spaniards, Italians, Belgians, Germans, all were there.

Adventure had attracted the adventurous, prey the birds of prey. Complicity in high places or cool calculation had flung all this world upon Paris. At last she was to perish, was the proud city, and to tear herself to pieces with her own hands! The bombs were cast; on the 22nd of January 12,000 were found at the town hall of Montmartre;[1] the

[1] Deposition of M. Choppin.

petroleum was ready; the city would be seen from afar blazing on her immense funeral pile. The incendiaries of the whole world were there, torch in hand.

But first it was necessary that Frenchmen should give themselves up to mutual slaughter in one last general conflict. For a thing had taken place never before seen in history: this excited population, this influx of chance comers and foreigners, these honest men and these violent men, these soldiers and civilians, old men and children, irritated, famished, left to themselves, were all armed to the teeth. Five hundred thousand rifles had been issued in the capital. There were powder factories everywhere, cartridges in thousands, two thousand cannons with their appurtenances. There was an army on foot, without an aim and without an adversary. It occupied an immense city, intact ramparts, forts, bastions, veritable citadels like the Butte aux Cailles, the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, and, as a last resource, it could raise at need in the entanglement of the streets the network of barricades.

For seven months this mass had been hurried on to battle. To disarm, break it up, calm it, these were enterprises full of danger; on reflection, an almost insurmountable task. Could it have been done at the time of the armistice? Prince Bismarck raised the question of disarmament. M. Jules Favre did not believe it to be possible. He prayed for pardon later on "from God and men."[1] To conquer, or suppress it, was a still more formid-

[1] See on this incident the pamphlet of Mme. Jules Favre, *La vérité sur les désastres de l'armée de l'Est, et sur le désarmement de la garde nationale*, 8°, 1883.

able work, perhaps criminal. How was it possible not to shrink from civil war on the morrow of the foreign war? Everybody lived in agony, waiting for the worst. Men who shared the responsibilities of those tragic hours said that these were the most awful moments in their existence. M. Thiers declares before the Commission of inquiry that from the first moment he had understood that he would have to "bring Paris to submission."

With what? The capitulation left the Government the right of maintaining a garrison of forty thousand men in the city. In reality, the regiments having been obliged to dismiss the men who had reached the end of their service, the army barely consisted of more than twenty-five to thirty thousand men. Young inexperienced troops, who had never seen fire, who did not know Paris. The soldiers had acquired the habit of passing the day in the family circles, fraternising in advance, or in the cafés and wine-shops. It was hardly possible to count except upon the limited band of republican guards, on the police of the Lobau barracks, on the sailors who in the end, having left the forts, had found themselves as it were on the spree, and on the garrison of these same forts solidly held by the officers.[1]

What is to be said of the National Guard? That is just where the danger lay. On this subject M. Thiers, a little bit hampered by his reminiscences of 1830, had for some time preserved certain illusions.[2] Now the evidence overwhelmed him. The best elements had left Paris for the provinces. The rest were openly organizing themselves for revolt.

[1] General Trocher, *Mémoires*, p. 582.
[2] Valfrey, *Histoire du traité de Francfort*, p. 10.

This was the quarter in which the first vital element of the insurrectional government began to vibrate. Suddenly the influence and authority of the famous Central Committee was seen to develop in the ranks of the National Guard. It borrowed the popular word "Federation" from the revolutionary traditions. It was already apparent in the month of September. In the beginning it assembled the "delegates of twenty wards," and it gave itself the mission of watching the acts of the Government and those of the regularly appointed chiefs. On the morrow of the armistice it assigned a political part to itself, and posed as the defender of the threatened Republic. Composed of obscure men chosen at first according to their relations with their own districts, it reconstituted itself on the 19th of February, and uniting with the International on the 10th of March, it received by the mere fact fresh blood and an energetic impulse. From the 16th of March, the date of the elections of the definitive Central Committee, it counted among its members Assi, Billioray, Edouard Moreau, Varlin, Jourde, Lullier, Ranvier, Fabre, Fougeret. Some of them are part of the International. Eudes, Duval, Bergeret, Raoul Rigault attach themselves to this group from that time. This is the embryo of the future Commune.

The statutes of the Central Committee, adopted on the 24th of February, contain the following preliminary declaration: "The Republic is the sole possible Government; it is beyond discussion." Each member of the Central Committee received on his election the following imperative mandate: "To oppose the removal of the cannon, to oppose every attempt at disarmament, to repel force by

force."[1] This certainly was, if not insurrection, the preparation for insurrection.

The population of the city, partly won in advance to insurrectional ideas, remained, in the majority, cold and indifferent. The divisional municipalities, and, above all, those of the outer circle, were in wavering or suspected hands. From every side advice-mongers, peacemakers, sprang up. But when action was required they were found to be without authority and without force. By their well-meant intervention they kept up the spirit of illusion, and that optimism, that universal blindness, which had been the great evil of the siege, and were still more deadly in the weeks that preceded and prepared events.[2]

The Deputation of Paris

The body of Parisian deputies alone, knowing better the elements with which they had to deal, and, in consequence, the gravity of the danger, assumed a significant attitude from the outset. The most advanced, like Victor Hugo, had given in their resignation at Bordeaux, or a little later at the moment of the vote on the preliminaries of peace; but the great majority—men like Louis Blanc, Brisson, Henri Martin, remained in a compact group round the national flag. This attitude should have served as a warning to the Parisians. The reason which fixed the decision of these men, these representatives, these Republicans, who were not under suspicion, and placed them between two fires, exposed their lives and their popularity, is that they did not want a revolution in the presence of the Prus-

[1] Document drawn up for his defence by Nestor Rousseau, member of the Central Committee.

[2] Deposition of Marshal MacMahon.

sians, and that whatever might be the sentiments of Paris, they feared any attack upon the national unity.

Many of them wavered; the Sicards, the Mélines, the Floquets, went in truth to the extreme limit of concession in order not to break the thread. Must we recall further the silence of Gambetta,[1] the tears of Jules Favre, the anxiety of Millière and Benoît Malon, the mixed feelings of the Provinces, in which the great towns revolted against the Assembly and rose for the Republic?

Must we recall, on the other side, the tremors, the imprudences and the faults of the Assembly? Must we recall the Monarchist Right seeking in the events which were brewing the means and justification of an immediate Restoration, finding fault with the "weaknesses" of M. Thiers, the "compromising acts" of the less suspected, and reducing to silence those whose words, if listened to, would perhaps have been the sole efficacious remedy?

We should embrace in one glance the complex perspective, so strangely agitated, which France then presented, with great savage black Paris standing out on the blood-red sky; we should let ourselves be carried away by the emotions of the spectacle to the point of that sudden vision

[1] I shall return to the sentiments of Gambetta with reference to the communistic movement. For the present, in order to explain them, this passage from a letter written to him by Spuller on the 11th of April, 1871, is sufficient: "For my part I believe that the communist movement will be defeated. . . . The Republic, it must certainly be said, runs the greatest risks. Perhaps it is stricken to death at this very hour, and we shall have to spend our lives in preparing a new generation capable of founding it, after having hoped for one moment to found it ourselves." *Revue de Paris*, June 1, 1900, p. 454.

which penetrates souls and fathoms hearts, in order to seize the causes, deep, manifold, human and superhuman, which in this unique hour determined the crowd, and once again hurled France into one of the most tragic misfortunes that humanity has known.

Preliminaries

Warnings had not failed. The 31st of October had almost succeeded with the cries of "Vive la Commune!" Blanqui who was the soul of that day, had been arrested, and was detained in prison. In November and January had been arrested Félix Pyat, Vermorel, Ranvier, Tridon, Vésinier, Flourens, Vallès, Millière, Lefrançais, Léo Meillet, Brunet, Delescluze, etc. Eighty persons had been put under lock and key. Very imprudent acts of liberation had taken place.

The most serious incidents multiplied in the city from the date of the armistice; pillage of magazines, of arms and ammunitions, construction of barricades, general effervescence, daily manifestations in the Place de la Bastille, pilgrimages, in which a crowd defiled before the column with crowns of immortelles and red flags, a crowd incessantly renewed, in which were seen men of the marching regiments led by their quartermasters, National Guards, soldiers, sailors, light infantry![1] Women robed in black hung banners on the railings of the monument and sang funeral dirges. It was the possession of suffering, the "red madness," convulsive seizures. In the course of one of these manifestations on the 26th of February a police agent was recognized, knocked about, then thrown into the water with unmentionable refinements of cruelty.

[1] General Vinoy, *L'armistice et la Commune*, p. 138.

However, these deeds would perhaps have remained isolated, and these terrors would have passed away, if the news had not spread on the night of the 27th of February that, in virtue of the clauses of the preliminary agreement, the Prussians would enter Paris. An indescribable emotion stirred the whole city.

The great wave of wrath gathered definition around this deepest shame. It was still floating in uncertainty, not knowing where to fasten, when the rumour spread that two parks of artillery, placed at Passy and the Place Wagram, had not been removed, and were going to be left to the Prussians. The National Guard considered that these guns were its own property; they had been bought by public subscription.

One single thought caught on from one to another as the sparks run up a train of powder. The alarm bell rings, the drums beat to arms, the clarions sound. The battalions, the crowd make a rush, harness themselves to the guns, and carry those of Passy to the Parc Monceau; those of the Place Wagram, that is to say, 227 cannons of 7, and some mitrailleuses, to Montmartre, to Belleville, to the Boulevard Ornano, to the Place des Vosges. Of this beginning great events were to be born.

The Prussians in Paris

On the 1st of March the Prussians entered Paris. The agreement limited the occupation to the section comprised between the Seine and the Faubourg St. Honoré up to the Place de la Concorde. Some squads penetrated unarmed into the court and galleries of the Louvre. On the appeal of the Government, and of the Central Committee, the crowd controlled itself. The Prussian soldiers only perceived it through

the bars of the gates of the Louvre. The shops were closed with the notice "on account of public mourning." The streets of the quarters occupied were abandoned, remaining deserted and silent in the presence of the enemy. The statues of the towns seated in the Place de la Concorde, had their faces covered with a black veil.

On the 3rd of March, in the morning, the foreign troops went away, turning their backs on this singular triumph. Count Bismarck had come in a carriage as far as the Place de la Concorde. The Emperor William abandoned the plan of holding a review in the Champs Elysées.

The Outbreak

Fifteen days passed away in the alternations of fear and hope. The question of the government was raised at Bordeaux, the question of disarmament at Paris. A conclusion was necessary. Both sides made their preparations.

On the 8th of March Duval, the future general of the Commune, established an insurrectional section at the barrier d'Italie, and organized for resistance. The Central Committee approached the International. Meanwhile M. Jules Ferry, Mayor of Paris, was still writing to the Government on the 5th of March: "The city is calm; the danger is over . . . At the bottom of the situation here, great weariness, need of resuming the normal life; but no lasting order in Paris without Government or Assembly. The Assembly returning to Paris can alone re-establish order, consequently work which Paris so much needs; without that, nothing possible. Come back quickly."

Then came the news relative to the law of debts and the question of rents, to the transference of

the Assembly to Versailles; it was affirmed that the *coup d'état* was in preparation.

M. Thiers returned on the 15th of March. He installed himself at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The moment had come to act. It was necessary to proceed to disarmament. Paris could not be left thus, beside herself, rifle in hand.

The knot was at Belleville and Montmartre. A Council of Ministers was called on the 17th at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The subject of deliberation was the opportuneness of a stroke on the part of authority which was defined in this formula: "recover the guns." M. Thiers says: "The general opinion was in favour of recovering the guns." He says again: "An opinion in favour of immediate action was universally pronounced." He says again: "Many persons, concerning themselves with the financial question, said that we must after all think of paying the Prussians. The business men went about everywhere repeating: 'You will never do anything in the way of financial operations unless you finish with this pack of rascals, and take the guns away from them. That must be done with, and then you can treat of business.'" And he concludes: "The idea that it was necessary to remove the guns was dominant, and it was difficult to resist it. . . . In the then situation of men's minds, with the noises and rumours which circulated in Paris, inaction was a demonstration of feebleness and impotence." [1]

The stroke was decided on; it consisted in bringing into the interior of Paris the guns which were guarded on the heights of Montmartre. There were at most 20,000 troops to execute the plan.

[1] Deposition of M. Thiers, *Enquête sur le* 18 *mars.*

It was arranged that action should begin at two o'clock in the morning. M. Thiers was at the Louvre, anxious, with General Vinoy, who answered for success. The operation seemed at first to be succeeding. General Lecomte occupied the plateau. The whole hill was surrounded. But a large number of teams would have been necessary to operate such a colossal removal before daybreak. The teams were not there; the army had no longer any horses. Several days were necessary to take away all the guns. Then it was seen that the operation was badly planned. However, seventy guns were carried off. The remainder were guarded by the troops, who waited with grounded arms.

Little by little the news that the guns were being taken away spread in Montmartre. The alarm-bell was rung. Some shots were fired and roused the quarter. The eminence and surrounding regions were astir. There was a shout of "Coup d'état." The National Guards assembled. The crowd, women, children, pushed around the soldiers who were guarding the guns. "Hurrah for the Line!" they cry on all sides. "You are our brothers; we do not wish to fight you." They penetrate into the ranks of the soldiers, offer them drink, disarm them. They hold up the stocks of their rifles, disbanding themselves. General Lecomte was surrounded from all sides, and taken prisoner, along with his staff.

M. Thiers returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the Hôtel de Ville, where the Mayor of Paris, M. Jules Ferry, remained permanently on duty, they waited for news. At first it was good; then it got worse; at half-past ten the disaster was defined; the head police office telegraphed:

" Very bad news from Montmartre. Troops refused to act. The heights, the guns and the prisoners retaken by the insurgents, who do not seem to be coming down. The Central Committee should be at the park in the Rue Basfroi ! "

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Government sat in permanence in the great gallery which looks on to the garden and over the quay. Men bringing news come in and go out. The generals deliberate in a corner.

The old Marquis de Vogüé was among the chance comers. He pulled out of his pocket his deputy's scarf of 1848, and he went from one to the other, bent, his voice broken, saying : " I know how it is done. You put that round your body, and you get yourself killed on a barricade."

General Le Flô, Minister of War, who had gone as far as the Place de la Bastille to get information, returned towards twelve or one o'clock.

It was decided to order the general call to arms to be beaten, in order to assemble the battalions of the National Guard, which, it was thought, could be relied on : only 600 men presented themselves.

M. Thiers, in a state of great emotion, wished to learn from General Vinoy what was the exact military situation.

Already by midday or one o'clock he was beginning to declare that it would be necessary to resolve to abandon Paris. In his impatience he went as far as the Pont de la Concorde to meet the troops, who were retreating in good order with General Faron at their head. Towards three o'clock he returned to the Quai d'Orsay.

The news in Paris was worse and worse. The barracks were taken or evacuated. However, the

Hôtel de Ville, resting on the troops of the Lobau barracks and occupied by Jules Ferry, who refused to abandon it at any price, the Hôtel de Ville still held out.

M. Thiers had hardly returned to the palace of the Quai d'Orsay when drums and clarions were heard, and from the windows three battalions of federates were seen passing; they were the National Guards of the Gros-Caillou, who were going to join the movement. In the palace there were only half a battalion of light infantry. In spite of the wavering of MM. Jules Favre, Jules Simon, and Picard, "whom it was difficult to convince of the necessity for this retreat," the Government understood that the chief of the Executive Power could not remain thus exposed. For the rest M. Thiers cut the question short. He decided that he should leave Paris, and betake himself to Versailles. It was half-past three or four o'clock. "Foreseeing that," says General Vinoy, "I had doubled my escort. I had had my carriage prepared, and all was ready. I said to M. Thiers: 'Put on your overcoat; the gate of the Bois de Boulogne is guarded, your escape through it is assured.' I had sent a squadron there. But before starting he gave me the order to evacuate Paris." M. Thiers, in fact, calling up, as he has himself said, recollections of the 24th of February, 1848, and of Marshal Windischgraetz, who "after having gone out of Vienna re-entered victoriously some time later on," was strengthened in his opinion by the state of disorganization and demoralization in which he felt the army to be.

He was insistent with General Vinoy to learn what troops there were which could be counted on.

The General told him that there was not one sure except the Daudel brigade. M. Thiers repeated again and again: "Send me the Daudel brigade to Versailles." There was no written order.

After the departure of M. Thiers General Le Flô, Minister of War, insisted on the necessity of complete evacuation. He affirmed that it would be impossible to hold out anywhere, not even at the Trocadero, and at Passy. He signed the order and "accepted all the responsibility."

Now the Daudel brigade occupied the forts, including Mont Valérien. Chance willed it that the two battalions of light infantry, whom it was proposed to withdraw from Paris, were on duty at this fort; this for a whole day was the entire garrison.

In the night between the Sunday and Monday General Vinoy, towards one in the morning, wrote a letter to M. Thiers, which Mme. Thiers read to him without his getting up, and in which he begged for authority to have Mont Valérien reoccupied. M. Thiers ended by consenting. Otherwise this fort, like those of Issy, Vanves, and Vincennes, would have been in the hands of the Commune. Mont Valérien was re-occupied on the 20th of March in the morning; the Federates presented themselves there some hours afterwards and summoned the commander to surrender, in vain.[1]

General Spread of the Insurrection

Meanwhile in Paris the Central Committee, taken at first by surprise, orders the beat to arms. Montmartre, Belleville, the Buttes Chaumont are in full insurrection. The Pantheon, Vaugirard, the Gobelins rise to the

[1] General Vinoy, *L'Armistice et la Commune*, p. 240.

voice of Duval. The battalions of the middle-class quarters did not respond to the call. At Montmartre a tragic scene was enacted and settled the implacable character of the outbreak.

General Lecomte, who had been arrested in the morning, was kept under surveillance in the house No. 6 of the Rue des Roziers. Clément Thomas, a former General of the National Guard, who had very imprudently mixed with the crowd in civil attire, was arrested and shut up with him. After some hours of frightful anguish Clément Thomas was seized the first: he was shot at close quarters just as he was going down the staircase; General Lecomte was shot in his turn in the garden, and, it is said, by his own soldiers. Blood had been shed.

In the evening M. Jules Favre hurled at a deputation consisting of MM. Sicard, Vautrain, Vacherot, Bonvalet, Méline, Tolain, Millière, etc., who tried to intervene in the name of the mayors, the formidable words: "There is no discussion, no treating with murderers."

The Central Committee, up to that time wavering, gave orders that Paris should be invaded and occupied. At the Hôtel de Ville M. Jules Ferry still held out. He received repeated orders to evacuate. At 9.55 p.m. he left the Hôtel de Ville, the last man to do so, carrying away his papers, and taking the servants with him. He crossed the whole centre of Paris already in the hands of the insurgents escorted by the troops of General Derroja, who forced their way, with fixed bayonets.

The palace and garden of the Luxemburg, where was encamped the 69th of the line, were not evacuated till the 23rd of March, and it was only

on the 30th that the Director of the Postal Service, M. Rampoul, deputy for the Yonne, left Paris.

II

So then a new siege of Paris was to begin; the insurrection, now become general, occupying the city and the forts on the South and West, M. Thiers and the National Assembly at Versailles, both parties under the eye of the German army, which, in conformity with the terms of the preliminaries, kept all the forts on the North and the East.

After that deadly day on which fatality had played so great a part, there was a moment of stupefaction, a halt, as if both sides hesitated before consummating the hateful rupture.

Attempts at Conciliation

For a week a great effort was made to arrive at an understanding. The mayors of Paris, the deputies, Colonel Langlois, appointed commander of the National Guard, Admiral Saisset, who replaced him, all strove in the same direction. The definite points on which deliberations were held aimed at the consecration of the republican form of government, the maintenance of the National Guard with the right to elect its officers, the settlement of a system assuring to the city of Paris its municipal freedoms, and, above all, the fixing of communal elections in Paris at a very early date.

But the understanding could not be brought about, because there was still the growl of anger, and those on whom agreement depended were already compromised. The wise men who went from Paris to Versailles, seeking to fill the parts of intermediaries, perceived with dismay that the air

breathed in the one place and the other was not the same.

Already on the 6th of March the Central Committee had given its adherence to the following motion: "That the Department of the Seine constitute itself an independent Republic in the case that the Assembly should decapitalize Paris." This idea had germinated. It is found again on the 20th of March in a decisive debate in which the members of the deputation and the Parisian municipalities took part, making a supreme effort with the Central Committee.

M. Clémenceau spoke first in the name of the mayors. He admitted the legitimacy of the claims of the capital, regretted that the Government had stirred anger; but he denied to Paris the right to rise against France. To this adjuration "a member of the Committee" opposed words, which were only a translation into action of the motion previously adopted: "As for France, we do not claim to dictate laws to her, we have groaned too much under hers, but we do not intend any longer to submit to rural plébiscites. The Revolution is made. Will you help us? Are you for us or against us?"

Millière, a deputy of Paris, intervened. Uncertain and sad, as he was during the whole of this crisis, already moved by the shadow of the fate which was to fall on him: "Take care," he said; "if you unfurl this flag, the Government will hurl the whole of France upon Paris: I seem to see in the future some deadly days in June." Malon, a member of the International, one of the most authoritative leaders of Socialism, and who was to take part in the Commune on the morrow, spoke in the same sense. But the demands of the fire-brands did not yield

a whit in the course of an eager and panting discussion. It went on and on, without advancing. It was midnight. Fatigue had possession of all. They refused to separate before coming to a conclusion, so heavy were the responsibilities.

Louis Blanc

Louis Blanc, silent up to that point, at last rose. Small and pale in the middle of that exhausted Assembly, he was the phantom of 1848, and of those days of June, the recollection of which had just been called up: "You are, he said, "insurgents against the Assembly, the most freely elected Assembly. We, regular mandatories, cannot admit a transaction with insurgents! We can certainly warn you against civil war, but we cannot appear as your auxiliaries in the eyes of France." The meeting dispersed after having in vain drawn up with Varlin a last plan of transactions, which the Committee disavowed the following day.[1]

On the Versailles side the pendant to this scene occurred in full sitting. The Assembly had met on the 20th of March. On the 23rd of March, the mayors and vice-mayors of Paris presented themselves and asked the Assembly to admit them into the hall of meeting. They are the bearers of urgent propositions for the re-establishment of order.[2]

The Assembly feared that if they were admitted to the bar there might be a renewal of the famous revolutionary sittings. It was decided that such members of the Delegation as were deputies should speak in its name, while the others should be

[1] Lissagaray, *Histoire de la Commune de* 1871, p. 121.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 117.

present at the sitting in one of the galleries reserved for the public. The compact group, dressed in black and girdled with the tricolour scarf, accordingly appeared in one of the galleries. A cry of "Vive la République" burst from among them and was repeated on the benches of the Left. It was the signal for an indescribable tumult. The Right refused to listen to anything from that time forward. The sitting was closed. The proposals brought by the representatives of the Parisian municipalities were not even discussed.[1]

In the interval of these two decisive days a fresh catastrophe had marked the check of the tentatives for negotiation.

A pacific manifestation made in the name of the "Friends of Order" was making its way towards the Place Vendôme, where the Central Committee was master of the staff; some scuffling took place, a pistol shot was fired, it is said, from the ranks of the crowd. The Federates fired in their turn, and the manifestation dispersed leaving some ten dead men on the pavement and a great number of wounded.

That was the end. Now began the fratricidal war.

The Communal Elections

The Central Committee fixed the elections of the Commune for the 26th of March. It asked the electors to sanction the initiative that it had taken. It made profit of the universal emotion, of the uncertainty which still reigned as to intentions and actions, in order to hasten the organization of the insurrection and give it in some sort a solemn investiture.

[1] Cf. the account of Lissagaray and that of the Vicomte de Meaux, *Correspondant* du 10 mai, 1902, p. 440.

Among the municipalities some thought it skilful to advise the voting. Several deputies, MM. Lockroy, Floquet, Clémenceau, Schoelcher, Tolain, Greppo, signed the placard which summoned the electors. Thus the new Government, which was going to be created at Paris under the name of "the Commune," rested at its outset upon an electoral manifestation, which did not count less than 224,000 voters. The number of the electors on the register being 481,000 there were 257,000 abstentions: but it must be remembered that a large number of electors had left Paris.

The confusion was such that at the time of the voting there was a period of calm and joy. It was believed that all was on the point of being settled. Paris betook itself in crowds on the 28th to the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, where the installation of the Commune took place. This was a second Festival of the Federation. A platform, red flags, the battalions of National Guard with the red fringes on their rifles, linesmen, sailors, disarmed, it is true, artillery, streamers, the Marseillaise, "Partant pour la Syrie," the joy and enthusiasm of the crowd, nothing was wanting.

In the name of the Central Committee Gabriel Ranvier solemnly conferred its powers upon the Commune. Paris then paraded in an order and with a peaceful confidence which snatched a cry of admiration even from uninterested spectators. The Central Committee posted up in the evening: "To-day Paris opens the book of history at a clean page and there inscribes her powerful name. . . ."

Energy of M. Thiers

At Versailles M. Thiers lost no time. All his cares were at first directed to the

fragment of an army which had accompanied the Government. Nothing could be less relied on than these men: the retreat upon Versailles had at first seemed a disbandment. The soldiers, defiling on a beautiful spring morning, were uncertain. Revolutionary songs were heard in their ranks. Soon order was re-established. The soldiers were kept out of the way, consigned to the camps, where they lived with their officers, abundantly fed, well clothed, at once watched and petted. They felt at their ease, and recovered confidence.

M. Thiers at the same time worked upon the Assembly. He dreaded its disorder, its mistimed discussions, its imprudent motions. To avoid every misunderstanding, he clearly defined its own programme in its presence. He has reflected, in fact; he has understood the needs of the hour. What is wanted is to save the country, the unity of the nation, and to save the unity of the nation it is necessary to maintain the Republic. Whence the bearing of his phrase, which he incessantly repeats: "It is the form of Government which divides us least."

His strong common sense at once caught the lesson given him by Paris; all the large provincial towns spoke to him in the same style. The movement of Paris was in fact not isolated; most of the towns were Republican.

The municipal councils of Rouen, Elbeuf, Havre, Dieppe, Quimper, Brest, Saint-Quentin, addressed very firm declarations to Versailles against any attempt at a restoration of monarchy.

In the South sentiments became heated, and local insurrections took place. Lyons was for three days from the 22nd to 25th dominated by the federates

who came down from La Guillotière, and were only held in by the firmness of M. Valentin, the Prefect, and General Crouzat. At Saint-Étienne the revolt which broke out on the 24th and lasted to the 27th was stained with blood by the murder of the Prefect M. de l'Espée and the police-officer Fillon. At Toulouse the movement was quickly suppressed. Narbonne was held in check by the conciliatory firmness of M. Marcou. But at Marseilles the Commune was proclaimed on the 23rd; it lasted thirteen days. The outbreak was provoked and in a certain measure controlled by Gaston Crémieux. General Espivent de la Villeboisnet did not recover the town on the 4th of April until after a bloody collision. At Limoges a popular movement which took place on the 4th of April cost the life of Colonel Billet of the Cuirassiers.

Lastly, to complete this dark picture, the towns of Algeria addressed vehement protests to Versailles, while the colony itself was threatened by the formidable revolt of the Bach-aga of the Medjana, Sidi Mohammed El Mokrani.

M. Thiers had then a very clear perception of the danger which threatened the national unity. In the constitutional crisis which had become universal the very existence of the country was at stake. He declared for the Republic. On the 27th of March, the day after the vote which instituted the Commune, he made the following declaration before the Assembly.

There are enemies of order who assert that we are preparing to pull down the Republic. I give them a formal contradiction: they are lying to France . . . We found the Rupublic established as a fact of which we are not the authors; but I will not destroy the form of government which I am now using to re-establish

order . . . I affirm that no party will be betrayed by us, that no fraudulent solution will be prepared against any party. We have accepted this mission, to defend order, and reorganize the country . . . When all is again settled the country will have the liberty to choose as it pleases, in what concerns its future destinies.

These last words went so far as to put the constitutional power of the Assembly in question. As for the declarations favourable to the Republic, M. Thiers defined them again in an interview which he had with the representatives of various provincial municipalities which had come to submit their misgivings to him. He told them that there doubtless were men in the Assembly favourable to the restoration of the Monarchy, but that there was no conspiracy in existence to turn out the actual Government; that in any case, if such a conspiracy existed, *he would not lend himself to its execution.* According to his own words, he pledged himself.

For the rest the majority of the Assembly felt that it was not strong enough to fight the Commune, if it claimed to direct the resistance itself. A commission of fifteen members had been appointed on the 20th of March to "ensure community of action on the part of the Assembly and the Executive Power." Even this Commission effaced itself before the necessity of action, of unity in guidance; and, to tell the whole truth, before the activity and competence of M. Thiers, before the authority that a man who knows what he wants infallibly gains over wavering minds in a time of universal confusion.

M. Thiers, who had derived extensive military knowledge from his studies in the wars of Napoleon, watched even over the strategic arrangements.

This siege is in a fashion his siege. These walls, he knows them: he it was who erected them in 1840. He spent long hours at the advanced posts, and he loved watching the effects of the artillery, glasses in hand, one arm behind his back.

He himself pointed out to the generals the weak point, that is to say, the insufficiency of the fortifications on the side of Saint-Cloud and Meudon.

The different army corps were distributed around the circumvallation: the first corps, commanded by General Ladmirault, at Courbevoie and the Pont de Neuilly; the fourth corps with General Douay at the Point-du-Jour; the second corps, commanded by General de Cissey, on the left bank in front of forts Issy and Vanves. General Barail with all the cavalry patrolled the country to prevent the insurgents from escaping or communicating with outside. General Chuchant at Satory and General Vinoy with the former army of Paris formed the reserve.

Strategic Arrangements

If Paris had flung herself upon Versailles in the first days which followed the rupture, it would perhaps have been all over with the Government, but the hour had passed. The strategic points were occupied and strongly defended. Mont-Valérien barred the way, and would at need support the besieging army.

That is what happened on the 3rd of April, in the solitary operation that was attempted by the soldiers of the Commune outside the walls. This famous "sortie en masse," so loudly cried up and advertised during the siege, took place for the rest somewhat too late. Badly prepared, badly led, it came to nothing. Henceforth Paris was shut up behind her

ramparts. The Federates remained masters only of the Pont de Neuilly.

The plan drawn up in the confabulations of the Hôtel de Ville consisted in an attack upon Versailles from the north and south at the same time.

The northern attack by Courbevoie and Asnières was to be directed on Rueil and Bougival; Bergeret and Flourens commanded on this side.

The southern attack was to be made through Châtillon and Meudon; Eudes and Duval directed this column.

Success was thought to be certain. In the night between the 2nd and 3rd of April Flourens telegraphed: "At no cost must we fail to go to Versailles this evening. We shall be victorious; there cannot be even a doubt of it."

Check to the sortie of April 3rd.

But the movement had hardly begun when the shells from Mount Valérien stopped the column of Bergeret short. The panic was sudden; the dispersion was complete. Flourens took refuge in a house in Rueil, where he was killed with a sabre cut by a captain of police.

Duval was stopped near Villacoublay. Eudes, a little more fortunate, occupied Bas-Meudon, Val-Fleury, part of Bellevue and Haut-Meudon. He held out all day. In the evening he was driven back upon the redoubt of the plateau of Châtillon, where Duval had preceded him. They were driven out of it the next day. Duval was taken and shot.

The army of Versailles made a movement in advance and occupied Courbevoie.

Personality of the Commune

The Commune is governing a besieged place. Let us see of what persons it was composed: out of ninety elected members,

fifteen were moderates, and seven radicals; these either sent in their resignations or took no part in the sittings. The revolutionary parties were predominant by a great majority. The Jacobins reckoned thirty-two members. The Central Committee introduced thirteen members. The International seventeen. The Socialist party counted some ten members who, for that matter, generally figured on the other lists. There were some double elections.

Two parties were quickly seen to form outlines in the Assembly: a party of brute force, the Jacobins; and a party of theorists, the Socialists. These latter were relatively moderates. The violent party grouped itself around Delescluze and Félix Pyat, the Socialists round Vermorel, Tridon, Arthur Arnould, and Lefrançais.

The Commune counted some men of real worth like Vallès, Malon, Varlin, the working bookbinder, one of the most interesting figures of the party; Tridon, a kind of millionaire with a mission, and that Félix Pyat, who is, in the opinion of all, the ulcerated soul and one of the most dangerous actors in the drama of insurrection; it counted revolutionaries in good faith, mostly artisans, Theisz, Assi, Duval, Dereure, Jourde; adventurers, "refractories" like Raoul Rigault, that ill-omened gutter-blood, and Flourens, a kind of melodramatic hero in whom Fra Diavolo is quaintly crossed with Don César de Bazan; some violent and atrocious souls such as Ranvier and Ferré; men of the old guard like Beslay and Gambon; sinister men like Billioray and Pourville; bandits like Eudes and Clément, and even simple lunatics like Babick and Jules Allix.

Behind the Commune the Central Committee continued to exist, and it watched its pupil narrowly.

The military Personnel

After the check to the sortie on the 3rd of April, the Commune understood the need of organizing the military defence. The men of action began to take the upper hand, Lullier, Bergeret, who had at the outset directed the military operations, were arrested. Cluseret, a Frenchman by birth but calling himself an American citizen and general, was appointed delegate for the war: a suspicious and close figure, a cold and ambitious soul. He gave himself the title of "general" and affected to appear in civil life in the middle of his staff wearing gold lace. He took for the chief of his staff Rossel, a young and talented officer, a pupil of the Polytechnic, whom a proud and weak judgment, ambition and resentment, flung upon adventure.

The Government of the Commune

Events now hurried on with rigorous logic. Revolutionary measures multiplied. At the outset the Commune made some show of government; it maintained order in Paris up to a certain point, and a kind of method in its deliberations. Something resembling that "grain of reason" attributed to it by Bismarck is to be discovered in them. But it soon fell into clumsy plagiarism of the first Revolution. The decree of hostages copied the list of suspects, the guillotine was suppressed, and solemnly burned in front of the statue of Voltaire; but it was replaced by the rifle.

In default of practical reforms the crowd was allowed free feeding for its anti-religious violence: suppression of the public worship fund, separation of the Church from the State, arrest of the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. Darboy, of several members

of the clergy, and Protestant congregations. Liberty of the press was effectively suppressed. Chaudey, deputy to the mayor of the first ward, one of the testamentary executors of Proudhon, and a member of the International, was arrested at the office of the *Siècle*, of which he was editor.

Divisions, hatred, rose to fever-point among all these desperate men. Disorder, indiscipline were everywhere. There was no longer any common understanding even for action, for self-defence. Rigault, a scrofulous Bohemian, a big fellow with an insolent carriage, passing from gluttony to the terror, was like a madman unchained at the Prefecture of Police. In the end he was removed from his post; but plagiarizing Fouquier-Tinville he had himself appointed Attorney-general to the Commune. Violence was only just arrested in front of the Bank of France, thanks to the energy of M. de Ploeuc, the relative moderation of the aged Beslay, and the coolness of Jourde, delegate of finance. For the rest the Bank of France was in some sort paying its ransom by advancing (with the authority of the Government at Versailles) the money necessary for the pay of "thirty sous."

The Supplementary Elections

Paris at length had opened her eyes. On the 18th of April, at the supplementary elections, in which eleven quarters were to take part, out of 280,000 electors on the register, only 53,000 took part in the votings: 205,000 abstained; that is to say, 80 per cent. of the registered electors. Half the vacant seats were unfilled. Clément and Courbet belong to this day. Henceforth there was nothing but the most manifest tyranny in the great city.

Programme of the Commune

The "Programme of the Commune," after lengthy elaboration, appeared on the 20th of April. The Separatist ideals and the Social Revolution were confirmed. Paris claimed to organize herself as a free Commune. *As for the great central administration*—the Government of France is intended—it was to be composed of the delegation of federated Communes. The city herself reserved "in favour of her autonomy, the power to effect at home, as she shall please, the administrative and economical reforms which her population demands . . . and which tend to universalize power and property. . . ."

Military Command given to Foreigners

In order to defend herself the Commune required men who had, so to speak, burned their boats. She appealed to foreigners. Dombrowski, a Pole, a Russian officer, then an insurgent, Garibaldian adventurer, at the bottom a suspicious character, was appointed to the command of the garrison. His brother, Ladislas, was named Colonel of the Staff. Wrobleski, another Pole, a good soldier, was named General; similarly, La Cecilia, an Italian officer. Hardly any Frenchmen are to be counted: Brunet, a former lieutenant in the Chasseurs d'Afrique; Matazewics, a captain of infantry of the line; Wetzel, the Ocklowitz, nearly all of half-foreign origin. Dombrowski, a man of indisputable courage, commanded between the Point-du-Jour and Saint Ouen, with his headquarters at La Muette. He had inside his section the point chiefly threatened, where there was continual fighting, the Neuilly gate. Wrobleski was at Gentilly; his command extended from the Point-du-Jour to Bercy.

It is difficult to estimate the forces which were

actually engaged on the side of the Commune. Cluseret had taken the initiative, for which he was, by the way, much reproached, of organizing the National Guard methodically: he had constituted "the marching companies," forming thus a kind of army on active service; the "sedentary" companies formed the reserve. The effective of the first is estimated at about 80,000 men, and of the second at 75,000 men. With the auxiliary services the federated National Guard might then reach an effective total of 200,000 men.

But the decision adopted by Cluseret had the effect of singularly reducing the real number of the combatants. The sedentary companies stayed at home. Furthermore, the companies were in general very far from being complete. Those which were on the advanced posts complained incessantly of never being relieved. In reality, from the 3rd of April to the 24th of May there were hardly more than twenty thousand combatants scattered over the immense circumference and occupying the forts.

The Siege in Form

M. Thiers, Paris once surrounded, decided to make the siege in form. The bastions of the Point-du-Jour were to be attacked, Fort Issy reduced, and a breach was to be made in the rampart to take the town by assault, if need be. The different operations which succeeded one another methodically from the 5th to the 20th of April all had this same objective. On the 25th of April a powerful force of artillery occupied, in place of the Prussian batteries, the terraces of Meudon, Breteuil, Saint Cloud, the heights which surround Paris on this side, and, aided by the artillery of Mont Valérien, silenced the forts,

and above all Issy. Fort Issy was even evacuated during the night of the 29th to the 30th, but immediately reoccupied by Cluseret. Versailles soon felt the certainty of a speedy victory.

Versailles

The Assembly showed itself fairly liberal in the passing of the law affecting municipalities, and it was only the insistence of M. Thiers which decided it to insert in the law voted on the 14th of April the Batbie amendment, which granted the right of electing their mayors only to communes of less than 20,000 souls. Paris was to name her Municipal Council, but the municipalities of the twenty wards were to be appointed by the Government. This is what M. Thiers called the "droit commun."

Confidence in the approaching success confirmed the majority and M. Thiers himself in their sentiments so distinctly unfavourable to ideas of conciliation. The "League of the Rights of Paris" snatched for a moment from the two adversaries their consent to a suspension of hostilities which only lasted ten hours and came to nothing. The Freemasons decided on a solemn intervention; they planted the banners of their lodges on the rampart, hoping thus to arrest the bombardment. The bombardment was, in fact, interrupted for twenty-eight hours. M. Thiers received a delegation from the lodges. He listened to them, but he sent them away. The bombardment was resumed on the 29th; the banners were hit. The lodges declared solemnly for the Commune.

Madness seized the Commune. Division, mistrust, mutual violence. Cluseret was impeached. He was replaced by Rossel. A great debate arose in the bosom of the communal assembly as to the direction

to be given to the conflict. The Jacobin party won the day, while the Socialist party formed a split and retired. The majority decided upon the creation of a *Committee of Public Safety*, composed of Ant. Arnaud, Léo Meillet, Ranvier, Ch. Gérardin and Félix Pyat. Here we have the reappearance of the old formulas, while the opponents of the creation of a Committee of Public Safety repeated with Vermorel: "Your Committee of Public Safety is nothing but a phrase."

Beneath the phrase there was a hidden thought, the Terror. There were two men: Félix Pyat, a dangerous literary failure, who would drive men and things to extremes, taking very good care to protect himself; there was also another man, who was soon to become the mysterious chief of the Committee of Public Safety, the master of the expiring Commune, the dictator of its agony, Delescluze.

Delescluze was a veteran in revolutionary parties. He had done his first service during the days of July, 1830, and taken part in the outbreaks of the 5th and 6th of June, 1832.

Prosecuted in 1836 as a member of the Society of the Rights of Man, he took refuge in Belgium. When the Revolution of 1848 broke out, his friend Ledru-Rollin appointed him commissary of the provisional Government in the Departments of the North and the Channel, just as Félix Pyat was commissary in the Department of the Cher. In March Delescluze, acting on revolutionary lines, directed an expedition against King Leopold, which came to grief at the Belgian village of Risquons-Tout.

After this check he resigned and came to Paris, where he founded the *Révolution Démocratique*.

He was then at the head of the party of action. Condemned on several occasions, he escaped and lived in England. He returned to Paris secretly in 1853; he was denounced, arrested, condemned to four years' imprisonment and deported to the Devil's Island (Guyana).

The amnesty of 1859 set him free. He came back to France in 1868; he founded the *Réveil*, and opened the famous subscription in favour of Baudin, which started the prosecutions of the Empire, began the political fortune of M. Gambetta, and cost Delescluze six months' imprisonment.

Condemned again in 1870, Delescluze passed into Belgium. He returned to France after the 4th of September, and took part in the days of October 31 and January 22. He was arrested afresh, his destiny being to spend his life in prison or in exile.

However, he had been elected mayor of the nineteenth ward.

At the elections of the 8th of February, 1871, Paris sent him to sit in the National Assembly. He resigned after the vote on the preliminaries of peace; and although of advanced age and in bad health, still energetic, he spent the fever, which consumed him, in the crisis, which broke out on the morrow of the siege, and whose furies were to crown and finish his tragic existence.

Delescluze and Rossel impart a final energy, the one to the Commune and civilian population, the other to the military commanders and the soldiers.

On the 29th of April M. Thiers determined on the emplacement of a new battery upon the heights of Montrebout, intended to play upon the actual circumvallation and to prepare the breach. On the

8th of May fire was opened. The shells carried into the whole western region, Auteuil, Passy, and as far as the Champs Elysées. Fort Issy was untenable. On the 9th of May it was evacuated and occupied by the Versailles troops.

The news of the taking of Fort Issy fell like a shell upon the deliberations of the disabled Commune. Rossel was already, after eight days, thrown down from his pedestal. He was accused, not without some cause, of aspiring to the dictatorship. He was sentenced to arrest: he is a "little Bazaine," "a fair-skinned Bazaine," said Félix Pyat. It was decided to appoint a civilian delegate of war; this was Delescluze. The Committee of Public Safety was renewed. The new selections, accentuating the note of energy, fell upon Ranvier, A. Arnaud, Gambon, Eudes, and, once again, Delescluze.

These names are significant. At the moment when the entrance of the soldiers into the city was only a question of days, men began to catch a glimpse of the horrors which were to close the drama: war in the streets, murders, conflagrations, perhaps complete destruction. It was said that the sewers were mined, and that everything would be blown up. The ranks of the combatants inside Paris thinned out, but savage resolution began to be read on their faces.

The conciliators made a last effort. The League of the Rights of Paris was again received by M. Thiers. It demanded an armistice. M. Thiers repeated the declarations, frankly republican, which he had already made to the delegates of the provincial municipalities. But he refused to treat with the Commune. It must surrender at discretion. Furthermore, the Commune loftily rejected

any idea of agreement. There was no longer only revolutionary energy, there was wilful, desperate blindness. Paschal Grousset was applauded when he demanded "to make an end of the conciliators," and Léo Meillet won approval for the reply made to a delegation of the League "that every man who speaks of conciliation is a traitor."

Sentiments of the Assembly at Versailles

At Versailles the Assembly was keeping guard over the smallest acts of M. Thiers. It now held the success in its hands; it wished this success to be complete, brutal, violent. The Commune is no longer the object of its aim, but Paris, the Republic. On the 11th of May M. Mortimer-Ternaux, although a personal friend of M. Thiers, questioned the chief of the Executive Power on the subject of the rumour that had spread to the effect that he had promised to the delegates of the provincial municipalities to protect the Republic and to show indulgence in the suppression. M. Thiers felt himself threatened; he was moved, and even a little embarrassed, as he took note for the first time of the mistrust of the majority. He lost his temper: "I refuse," he said, "to give the explanations demanded of me." He attacks in his turn: "I cannot govern any longer," he said; "if I displease you, tell me. We must take stock of ourselves here, and do so resolutely; we must not hide ourselves behind an equivocation. I say that among you there are men who are in too great a hurry. They still want eight days more; at the end of those eight days we shall be in Paris; there will be no more danger, and the task will be proportioned to their courage and capacity." The clever hit is written in history.

It reached its mark. It gave some respite to

M. Thiers. In the sitting of the 13th of May, the Assembly voted urgency upon a proposal of M. de Cazenove de Pradines, of which the object was "to ask for prayers in all the churches of France, to pray to God to appease our civil discord, and to bring to an end the evils that afflict us."

On the 14th of May Fort Vanves was occupied. The circle drew closer in. Delescluze, though dying, was everywhere; he tried to rouse the battalions whose effectives were diminishing. On the 16th of May, at nightfall, the Vendôme column was flung from its pedestal and shattered. The minority of twenty-two members separated from the majority. Soon it joined them again; on the 17th of May there still remained at the Hôtel de Ville sixty-six members present at the roll-call.

The forts taken, the walls were on the point of yielding. It was necessary to think of the classic strife of insurrection, barricade fighting. But the military men of the Commune, Cluseret, Rossel infatuated with their ideas of the great war, had made no preparations. Men felt themselves taken by surprise. What was to be done? Then it was that the idea of destruction, of the annihilation of the town in the last hours of the catastrophe, began to haunt those fated brains. Delescluze and his colleagues of the XIXth ward placarded: "After our barricades, our houses; after our houses, our ruins." Vallès wrote: "If M. Thiers is a chemist he will understand us."

An immense horror spread over the town, no longer knowing the nature of the awakening it awaited. The population, which had let things take their course, was now reduced to shutting itself up in the houses. The National Guards ran

hither and thither in the empty streets forcing suspected houses or shops to open with the stocks of their rifles. Some timid efforts were distinguishable on the part of the National Guards of order to prepare resistance from the inside. M. Thiers received numerous suggestions, proposals of all kinds. One day a promise was made to deliver one of the gates of Paris to him. He spent the night with General Douay in the Bois de Boulogne waiting for the signal which never came. Meanwhile he was informed that he would find a counter-movement all ready as soon as the troops crossed the lines of defence. Tricolour sleeve-badges were prepared. The great mass of the population waited for the entrance of the regular troops in a state of terrible anxiety.

The Commune felt that it was surrounded by enemies. It decided to draw up lists of suspects. Amouroux recalled that a law of hostages was in existence and cried out : " Let us strike the priests." Rigault on the 19th inaugurated the sittings of a jury of accusation. On all sides shooting began at the moment when the terrible contact was on the point of taking place.

The works of approach now permitted the bombardment of the gates of la Muette, Auteuil, Saint-Cloud, Point-du-Jour. The Federate troops, worn out by ceaseless efforts, refused to serve. The breach is made ; the wall, untenable under the hail of projectiles, is abandoned. The assault was fixed for the 23rd.

On the 21st, towards three o'clock in the afternoon, a man appeared alone upon the ramparts near the Saint-Cloud gate. He waved a white handkerchief. In spite of the projectiles, he insisted, he

shouted. Captain Garnier, of the Engineers, on service in the trenches, drew near. The man declared that the gate and the wall were without defenders, that the troops could penetrate into the town without striking a blow. He gave his name. It was Ducatel, a foreman in the municipal service.

He was believed and followed; the gate is crossed: the troops of Versailles enter Paris. M. Thiers looked on at this unexpected movement from the top of the battery of Montretout. At one moment the soldiers were seen coming out again, and a cry rose around him: "We are repulsed." But confidence was soon restored. By the aid of glasses "as it were two long black serpents were distinguished gliding along in the folds of the ground, and directing their heads to the gate of the Point-du-Jour, through which they entered." The officers in command, on being informed, stopped the fire directed upon the ramparts. The troops slip inside from one place and another along the wall without at first penetrating into the town.

III

Entrance of the troops into Paris

The day was Sunday, one of those charming spring days which in Paris are so full of light and gaiety. There was a charity entertainment in the garden of the Tuileries, and the crowd, rejoicing in so mild an afternoon, was hurrying to listen to the music, which was accompanied by the bass of cannon in the distance. It was the first day of the fishing season, and a number of Parisians, faithful to the annual meeting, lined the quays.

Life is so arranged that in the midst of disorder it constitutes a kind of order for itself. In the

centre of the city there was no news of what was going on at the circumference, and at the fall of day the crowd of holiday-makers dispersed without knowing the great event.

The Commune was sitting; Cluseret was being tried. He had to reply to the more numerous than definite accusations which bore heavily on him. Miot was the prosecutor. Vermorel had taken up the word in his defence. All of a sudden Billioray, who belonged to the permanent division of the Committee of Public Safety, interrupts. He holds a paper in his hand: "Finish," he said, "I have a communication of the highest importance to make to the Assembly, and one for which I demand a secret committee." The public sitting is suspended, and, his hands trembling, he reads Dombrowski's despatch: "Dombrowski to the delegate of War and the Committee of Public Safety. The Versailles men have entered by the Saint-Cloud gate; I am making dispositions to repulse them. If you can send me reinforcements, I answer for everything." Billioray announces that the battalions have been sent. After these words he disappears; he is not seen again.

A kind of stupefaction fell upon the Assembly. It was not any longer capable even of forming a decision upon the resolutions necessary in the last hour. It resumed in haste the deliberations with reference to Cluseret. He was acquitted. Immediately, as though by a tacit understanding, the Assembly dispersed. Its members disappeared. The Commune as a body politic ceased to live. It vanished.

Everything depended upon the Committee of Public Safety, and its incarnation, Delescluze.

Cluseret was free at seven o'clock in the evening.

He has himself related that, surprised at his liberty no less than by the imminent catastrophe, he wished to take stock of what preparations had been made for the defence of the town. So he bent his steps to the Ministry of War, where the Committee of Public Safety sat in permanence. There he found himself face to face with his implacable enemy, Delescluze. "I went into the big room with the yellow silk hangings. In one corner, a little table, a little lamp, and a little old man. It was Delescluze. He had his head resting on his hands. Bent, broken, shrunken. He had not heard me. I drew near. He lifts his head.—'Well, Delescluze, where are you now?'—'Ah, it's you, Cluseret, you come to take my place?'—'No.'—'Where are we then? I know nothing.' He expressed himself with extreme difficulty; his voice rattled; he might have been a ghost. . . ." It was this dying man who by a series of successive eliminations had assumed the supreme responsibility. Disabled, exhausted, he soon left the Ministry for the Hôtel de Ville, and again, a little time after, the Hôtel de Ville for the XIth ward, of which he was mayor.

From this moment it was a war in the streets, but a war without method, without guidance, without a chief, a war without discipline, the struggle of despair. Each quarter, each group fought for its own hand. The positions which had been prepared for the internal defence were guarded or abandoned as chance willed.

In the night between the Sunday and the Monday seventy thousand men under arms from Versailles had slipped in some way along the fortifications forming a vast semi-circle from La Muette to the Champ-de-Mars by the Auteuil viaduct. General

Douay had advanced by Auteuil and Passy to the Trocadéro. There was some fear that the ground was mined. But Ducatel walking some paces in advance of the General, declared that there was nothing to be feared.

On Monday, the 22nd of May, in the morning, a proclamation of Delescluze was posted up, announcing the entrance of the men of Versailles. It was a call to arms: "Room for the people, for the bare-armed fighting men. The hour of the revolutionary war has struck." The last stale phrases of expiring Jacobinism.

During this day the Versailles troops occupied Paris as far as the Palais de l'Industrie, the left bank along the quay, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Champ de Mars, the École Militaire, and soon Vaugirard, the Invalides, the Palais Bourbon, the Mont-parnasse station; on the right bank the whole region included between the Saint Lazare station and the Place Clichy. One would say that the end was on the point of being possible in a single blow. M. Thiers telegraphed to the prefects on the 21st of May, at 6.30 p.m.

The Saint-Cloud gate has just fallen under the fire of our guns. General Douay has hastened to the spot, and is at this moment entering Paris with his troops. The corps of Generals Ladmirault and Clinchant are moving forward to follow him.

The Week of Tragedy

If the Versailles troops had hurried the movement, perhaps they would have profited by the confusion of the Federates and rapidly taken the whole town. But it was wished to avoid a check at any cost; the explosion of mines was feared; the advance was surrounded with precautions, it was made with prudence and often with sapping, suspected houses being searched.

In the night between Monday and Tuesday the insurgents took a fresh lease of courage. The resistance recovers some hopefulness, it is felt that it is now desperate. A burning sun illumines the city. The alarm bell sounds: the call to arms is beaten. The Federates descend from the suburbs. All come and, conscious of greater numbers, lend mutual courage. The barricades are occupied; fresh ones are thrown up; it is said that there were five hundred in Paris. The central quarters formed, as it were, a formidable block, having as its front the defences formed by the Place de la Concorde, the Rue Royale, the Boulevard Malesherbes, the Place Clichy, on the right bank; the barricades of the Rue du Bac, of the Rue Vavin, the Rue de Rennes, the Rue de la Croix-Rouge, the Rue du Panthéon on the left bank; and as a reduct Montmartre, the Buttes-Chaumont, Père-Lachaise, the Gobelins, the Butte-aux-Cailles. It was a fortress inside a fortress. The real battle was going to open. The psychological condition was no longer the same. On both sides a hideous rage tore all these men from the sense of humanity.

Capture of Montmartre

On Tuesday, the 23rd, at four o'clock in the morning, the troops which had bivouacked in the street resumed the attack. Montmartre was the objective. A smart fight was expected. The height was carried towards two o'clock almost without striking a blow. It is said that this formidable operation was rendered easier by the agency of money. Dombrowski, beaten at La Muette, fell back. He was mortally wounded; he died with words in his mouth which showed his chief preoccupation: "And they say that I betrayed them!" His body was carried to the Hôtel de

Ville, and laid in Mlle. Hausmann's bed; on the following day the Federates accompanied it with a kind of funeral procession to Père-Lachaise.

The fighting was terrible in the Faubourg St. Honoré in the Boulevard Malesherbes, at the Madeleine, in the Rue Royale, on the Terrace of the Tuileries. Brunel was in command there; he, too, had come from prison.

However, this position was turned by the capture of Montmartre. Brunel, in obedience to the orders given by Delescluze, began the conflagration by setting fire to the houses in the Rue Royale, which were close to the barricades.

The Tuileries and the Louvre were surrounded. Bergeret held a council of war in the great hall of the Tuileries. He had the rooms soaked with petroleum, caused barrels of powder to be brought up and gave the order for burning the Palace.

On the left bank, the troops which were marching upon the Panthéon were stopped at the Croix-Rouge, at the Rue de Rennes, at the Bellechasse barracks. They moved on, however, as far as the quay by the Rue de Légion-d'Honneur. But before retreating the Federates set fire to the Rue de Lille, the Palais du Conseil d'État and the Cour des Comptes, to the Palais de la Légion d'Honneur, where "General" Eudes, before decamping, did not forget to deal his stroke.

After two hours' fighting the Federates who had defended the barricade in the Rue Vavin fell back; but first they blew up the magazine of the Luxembourg. The whole of the left bank was shaken as though by an earthquake. At the town hall of the eleventh ward, where Delescluze was dying, he was still speaking in low tones, and his appearance was

so heart-breaking that in the midst of such a day he still appealed to the emotions of those who were present. In accordance with his orders, the defence of the quarter of the Bastille and the Faubourg Saint-Antoine was prepared.

When night came Brunel abandoned the Rue Royale. At three o'clock in the morning Bergeret blew up the Tuileries. Notre-Dame and the Hôtel-Dieu were only saved by the courage of the staff of the hospital, led by M. Brouardel. Everything was burning; there were explosions everywhere. A night of terror. The Porte Saint-Martin, the church of Saint-Eustache, the Rue Royale, the Rue de Rivoli, the Tuileries, the Palais-Royale, the Hôtel de Ville, the left bank from the Légion d'Honneur to the Palais de Justice and the Police Office were immense red braziers, and above all rose lofty blazing columns. From outside all the forts were firing upon Paris. Inside Paris Montmartre, now in the hands of the Versailles troops, was firing upon Père-Lachaise; the Point-du-Jour upon the Butte-aux-Cailles, which returned the fire. The gunners were cannonading one another across the town and above the town. Shells fell in every direction. All the central quarters were a battle-field. It was a horrible chaos; bodies and souls in collision over a crumbling world.

The night was dark, the sky black, a violent wind got up; it came from the south, and spat all the flames, all the smoke, all the horror of the immense conflagration in a squall of fire towards the west, towards the enemy, Versailles, and towards those slopes of Saint-Cloud, from the heights of which the members of the Government, the members of the Assembly, lit up from afar by the

ill-omened illumination, came to look on at a catastrophe in which the city was perhaps on the point of sinking.

M. Thiers

M. Thiers had returned to Paris on Monday, the 22nd, at three o'clock in the morning, by the Point-du-Jour gate. M. Jules Ferry, Mayor of Paris, had accompanied the first battalion of infantry, which following the left bank had occupied the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, just quitted by M. Pascal Grousset. Here was the seat of Government; here Marshal Macmahon established his headquarters. All orders came from there. M. Thiers, however, maintained constant relations with the National Assembly which continued to sit at Versailles.

On the 18th of May he had been obliged to make a great effort to snatch from the Assembly in public session the vote which ratified the peace of Frankfort.[1]

He comes nearly every day, keeping the Assembly informed of the facts, calming impatience and gradually assuming the moderator's part which was to become so necessary.

On the 22nd of May he mounted the tribune and made a stirring communication, which announced the entrance of the troops into Paris. The Assembly voted by acclamation and unanimously the following motion: "The National Assembly declares that the armies by land and sea and the Head of the Executive Power of the French Republic have deserved well of their country." M. Thiers showed that he was very happy, perhaps too happy, "he was no longer seventy-four years of age but forty at most!" The most ardent press him to show

[1] See below chapter v.

neither grace nor mercy. Decisions of groups, personal applications crowd around him, assail him in his study. The news of the terrible disasters which were ruining Paris and steeping her in blood, drove all minds to frenzy.

What must then have been the sensations in the thick of the combat, what the physical enervation, the fury of the soul, when a cool-headed man like M. Martial Delpit, though out of reach of danger, wrote to his wife on the 24th of May, reproducing the universal sentiment in a single phrase: "It is possible that our house is being burned at the present moment. It is declared that the Tuileries, the Ministry of Finance, the Court of Accounts no longer exist. The brigands have lighted the fire and escaped. It is as at Munster: these men are regular anabaptists. And these wretches will be petted that they may infect future generations!" M. Francisque Sarcey, a man of notorious good sense, wrote: "Madmen of this kind, and in such large numbers, and with a common understanding, constitute so terrible a danger for the society to which they belong, that there is no longer any possible penalty except radical suppression." M. Pessard denounces these "brigands," "the females with hanging breasts." The *Parisien Journal* attacked the "lukewarm," and published an article entitled: "The art of recognizing *pétroleuses*."

M. Thiers was asked how he intended to organize the suppression. On the 22nd of May he declared to the Assembly: "Justice will be done by the regular ways. The laws alone will intervene; expiation in the name of the law and according to the law." Pressure was put upon him. On the 25th of May he renewed his declarations: "The

public conscience must be implacable; but it must be implacable according to the law, with the law, and by means of the law." The Departments of the Seine and Seine-et-Oise being in a state of siege, it pertained to the military authority in virtue of the law of the 9th of August, 1849, and the terms of the Code of Military Justice to draw up and prosecute all the cases connected with the insurrection.

Prisoners were already flowing in. But the Commune was not yet beaten. In the city all the furies were unchained. In the course of a deadly struggle, in which all minds lost their balance, the blood frenzy became universal. The most hideous rumours spread abroad: the soldiers were being murdered, were being poisoned; the firemen were putting petroleum in their engines. Now it is affirmed that the Commune, in a last convulsion of its rage, has assassinated the hostages.

The Murder of the Hostages

In fact on Wednesday, the 24th, in one quarter, police agents, prisoners, were shot in cold blood at Sainte-Pélagie by order of the pretended revolutionary tribunal presided over by Raoul Rigault. At La Roquette, in the night between the 24th and 25th, on the written order or Ferré, transmitted by Genton, a magistrate of the Commune, a squad commanded by a Federate captain, Vérig, massacred the Archbishop of Paris, Abbé Deguerry, Fathers Clerc, Ducoudray, Allard, and M. Bonjean.[1] Death was everywhere. On both

[1] The Commune had appeared to be disposed to exchange Mgr. Darboy against Blanqui. The Archbishop himself had entreated M. Thiers by letter to consent to the proposed exchange. But the Government and the Parliamentary Committee, on being consulted, advised the rejection of these offers; they were afraid of seeing wholesale arrests made in Paris with the object of ensuring the impunity of the guilty.

sides henceforth the word of command was to be: "No quarter." On the same day, at ten o'clock in the morning, fifteen members of the Commune met at the Hôtel de Ville. They decided to burn it down. The fire was started in the roof. Soon the ancient municipal building was in flames.

On the 25th, Thursday, the new line of defence was at the bridge of Austerlitz, leaning on Mazas. Another siege began, a second assault had to be delivered. The troops were exhausted. But the last combatants were resolved to perish. Women and children were on the barricades and delivered fire. A strange frenzy excited these brave but feeble beings. They continued to struggle after the men had left the barricades. At Mazas the civil prisoners revolted. At the Avenue d'Italie the Dominicans of Arcueil and their servants were massacred by the National Guards of the 101st Federate battalion, commanded by Serizier.

Meanwhile the bridge of Austerlitz was carried. The Butte-aux-Cailles, where Wroblewski resisted with energy, was occupied. The whole left bank was taken as far as the Orleans station. Fighting was still going on at the Château-d'Eau and the Bastille. The Place de la Bastille was turned by way of the Vincennes railway. All the survivors of the struggle, the desperates, met at the town hall of the XIth ward, on the Boulevard Voltaire around Delescluze, who was still obeyed; Vermorel on horseback, wearing the red scarf, was visiting the barricades, encouraging the men, seeking and bringing in reinforcements. At midday twenty-two members of the Commune and the Central Committee met; Arnold informed them of a proposal of Mr. Washburne, Minister of the United States,

suggesting the mediation of the Germans. Delescluze lent himself to this negotiation: he wished to make for the Vincennes gate, but he was repulsed by the Federates, who accused him of desertion. He came back, returned to the town hall, and wrote a letter of farewell to his sister.

Towards seven o'clock in the evening Delescluze set out accompanied by Jourde and some fifty Federates, marching in the direction of the Place du Château-d'Eau; Delescluze was dressed correctly, silk hat, light overcoat, black frock coat and trousers, red scarf round the waist, as he used to wear it; he was distinguished by his neat civilian costume from his company with their tattered uniforms. He had no arms and supported himself on a walking-stick. He met Lisbonne wounded, who was being carried in a litter, then Vermorel wounded to death, held up by Chièze and Avrial. Delescluze said some words to him and left him. The sun was setting behind the square. Delescluze, without looking to see whether he was being followed, went on at the same pace, the only living being on the pavement of the Boulevard Voltaire. He had only a breath left, his steps dragged. Arriving at the barricade he slanted off to the left and climbed the paving stones. His face was seen to appear with its short white beard, then his tall figure. Suddenly he disappeared. He had just fallen stricken to death.[1]

In the night, while the centre of Paris was one immense furnace, the conflagration reached the quarters which were still being defended. Fire at the Château-d'Eau, fire at the Boulevard Voltaire,

[1] Jourde in his *Souvenirs* and de Lissagaray in his *Histoire de la Commune.*

fire at the Grenier d'Abondance. The Seine, whose waves were already dyed with blood, rolled through Paris like a red bed of fire; straws from the granary, papers from all the different records, made a rain of sparks in the air; the atmosphere was scorching, stinking; fire and murder were now the breath of life.

From Thursday, the 25th, there was a multiplication of executions. At the Saint-Sulpice seminary an ambulance of Federates, under the direction of Doctor Faneau, was slaughtered; it was said that some combatants had taken refuge here and had fired on the troops. Everywhere upon the barricades national guards taken with arms in their hands were shot. The houses were entered and searched; everything that was suspicious, everything that seemed suspicious, was in danger. The soldiers, black with smoke, were the blind instruments of public vengeance; sometimes also of private grudges. They no longer knew what they were doing. Their chiefs did not always take account of the formal orders which had been given by Marshal MacMahon and forbade useless violence. Often, too, the officers tried in vain to restrain the fury of the exasperated troops. A National Guard's jacket, trousers with red stripes, blackened hands, a shoulder appearing to be bruised by the rifle-stock, a pair of clumsy boots on the feet, a suspicious mien, age, figure, a word, a gesture sufficed.

Courts Martial were opened at the Châtelet, at the Collège de France, at the École Militaire, in several town halls. The prisoners, collected in crowds at all the points where resistance had occurred, and, one may say, over the whole city, were sent before these improvised tribunals, which pro-

ceded to a summary classification. Whether in the streets, or even before these tribunals, how many premature executions were there? How many decisions equivalent to these executions?[1]

On Friday, the 26th, the fighting was concentrated first at Belleville and the Place du Trône. At Belleville, at the town hall of the XIth ward, the remnant of the Central Committee had resumed the direction of Affairs along with Varlin. The command was entrusted to Hippolyte Parent. Ferré was carrying out to the very end the horrible mission which he had imposed upon himself. After a hideous procession in the streets, which was but one long agony of death, forty-eight hostages, priests, policemen, Jesuit Fathers, were massacred in the Rue Haxo. Towards evening Jecker, the banker, was shot at Père-Lachaise.

On the other side, at the Panthéon, Millière, who took sides only at the last moment, Millière who had long intervened, Millière upon whom a fatality and perhaps an implacable hatred were weighing, Millière was shot, his arms folded, on the steps of the Panthéon.

The Bastille gave in at two, La Villette was still holding out. It rained. Indescribable sufferings overwhelmed the exhausted combatants. The fighting was now centred in the extreme quarters, not far from the advanced guards of the German army, who looked on at this spectacle, impassive, contenting themselves with herding back the fugitives, who were hurrying in this direction. From the top of the ramparts the Prussian regiments were seen under arms.

[1] Camille Pelletan's book *La Semaine sanglante* 1880 should be consulted, but with reservations.

The Agony of the Commune

Fighting was still in progress on Saturday, the 27th. The weather was awful; the sky livid, first a fog, then torrents of rain. There was fighting at La Villette, fighting at Charonne, fighting at Belleville. The centre of resistance was still the town hall of the XIth ward, the Buttes Chaumont, and the Rue Haxo. Ranvier brought the last combatants up to the barricades. Ferré was leading a troop of prisoners of the line, whom he still proposed to shoot; they were delivered by the crowd. He went back to La Roquette to fetch fresh victims, but the three hundred men imprisoned there showed fight. Those alone perished who tried to escape, and soon Ferré fled as fast as his horse could gallop at the sound of the cry: "Here are the Versailles men."

On Saturday evening two centres of resistance remained in the XIth and XXth wards. Five or six members of the Commune, Trinquet, Ferré, Varlin, Ranvier, still held out at Belleville. Some hundreds of the Federates threw themselves into Père-Lachaise, determined to fight and die behind the tombs.

On Sunday, at four o'clock in the morning, Père-Lachaise was carried after a short struggle. The two wings of the Versailles army which had enveloped Paris met at the Rue Haxo, where they captured thirty pieces of artillery from the Federates. The town hall of the XIth ward was taken after a desperate resistance. The last groups of the Federates, led by Varlin, Ferré, Gambon, wandered from the XXth ward to the Rue Fontaine-au-Roi in the XIth. Louis Piat hoisted the white flag and surrendered with some sixty combatants. The last barricade was in the Rue Ramponneau. One

single Federate was defending it; he escaped; the last shots were fired. By one o'clock all was over. The tricolour floated over the whole city. On the 29th the Fort of Vincennes, defended by 375 infantry, of whom twenty-four were officers, surrendered after having vainly tried to negotiate with the Germans. In the evening nine officers were put to death in the ditches.

Marshal MacMahon caused the following proclamation to be posted on Sunday at midday :—

INHABITANTS OF PARIS

The army of France has come to save you. Paris is delivered. Our soldiers carried at four o'clock the last positions held by the insurgents.

To-day the conflict is over, order is re-established, work and safety will again come into being.

Maréchal DE MACMAHON.
Duc de Magenta.

Thanksgiving Services

On the same day at Versailles the National Assembly attended a thanksgiving service held at the church of Saint-Louis. An eye-witness writes : " We are leaving the Church of Saint-Louis where we had been assembled by the ceremony of public prayers. Every one was moved and humiliated, and, to tell the truth, the most obstinate bent the knee. The ceremony was fine and imposing; the music was purely military and grandiose in its effect. M. Thiers arriving, dressed in his black frock-coat, followed by the Minister of War and a brilliant staff, had quite a fine air. He has hardly grown thinner; his expression, a mixture of concentrated grief and dignity, represented fairly well the part of the great citizen impassive in the midst of ruins and the most terrible calamities."

The strife was over; the arms had fallen. Those who had smitten were now smitten themselves, and those who had suffered from the madness of one party were now suffering from the vengeance of the other.

Of the seventy-nine members of the Commune which sat on the 21st of May one alone died on the barricades: Delescluze, Jacques Durand and Raoult Rigault had been shot; Brunel and Vermorel had been wounded severely; Protot, Oudet and Frankel slightly. All the others were in flight or had disappeared. Varlin was soon going to be denounced and put to death. Félix Pyat, Vallès, Miot, Cluseret had fled. Jourde, Paschal Grousset, Assi, Ferré were arrested. This last, perhaps the most criminal of all, was to be shot. Rossel was also shot, and no pity was shown to Gaston Crémieux, who died bravely. Actions were also brought against Urbain, Billioray, Trinquet, Champy, Régère, Rastoul, Verdure, Descamps, Joseph Clément, Victor Clément, Courbet.

If the chiefs for the most part escaped, the satellites or simple National Guards were cruelly punished. The number of men who perished in this horrible fray, without any other form of law, is estimated at seventeen thousand. The cemeteries, the squares, private or public gardens, saw trenches opened in which nameless corpses were deposited without register and without list by thousands.

Thirty-five thousand eight hundred prisoners were sent to Versailles, camped at Satory, or shut up on two estates in the neighbourhood, and in the prisons of the town; then after a first examination, shed upon Brest, Lorient, Cherbourg, La Rochelle

and Rochefort. Up to 1875 the total number of arrests amounted to forty-three thousand five hundred and one. Old men, young men, men in the prime of life, women, children, all conditions, all ages, figured in these unhappy bands. Here is the perhaps over-elegant page in which Théophile Gauthier describes a meeting with one of these bands:

"The heat was horrible. . . . The sun poured spoonfuls of molten lead on the earth. These unfortunates brought from Paris on foot by mounted men who involuntarily forced them to hurry on, worn out with fighting, a prey to terrible hallucinations, panting, dripping with sweat, had not been able to go any further. . . . They had been obliged to crouch and lay themselves on the ground like a herd of oxen stopped by their drovers at the entrance to a town. Around them their guards formed a circle, overwhelmed, as they were, by the heat, hardly holding themselves up on their motionless horses, and resting their chests on the pommel of the saddle. . . . The crowd of prisoners was gasping. . . . A fiery unquenchable thirst burned these poor wretches, parched by alcohol, by fighting, marching, by the intense heat, the fever of the desperate situation, and the horrors of approaching death, for many expected to find the firing order at the end of their journey. They gasped and panted like hounds crying in hoarse and husky voice, 'Water, water, water!'

"In that state even brute beasts would have inspired pity!"

There was the compulsory exodus of a whole district of the great city. There was the dread and suspicion spread over the whole town. There

were 350,000 denunciations. Nobody was safe. The camps round Paris saw unmentionable sufferings. Judging went on everywhere. On the motion of M. Berenger twenty-two supplementary councils of war were instituted: 46,835 actions were drawn up and tried. There were 23,727 sentences of "insufficient cause"; 10,137 summary convictions; ninety-five summary sentences of death and 120 by contumacy. Besides Ferré, Rossel, and Gaston Crémieux, Philippe and twenty-two others were shot. There were 1,169 sentences of deportation to a fortification, 3,417 simple deportations, 1,247 detentions, 332 banishments, 251 sentences of penal servitude, of which ninety-one were life sentences, 4,873 to various penalties; 23,727 persons, of whom 623 were women and 458 children, were set at liberty, profiting by a sentence of insufficient cause. There were 9,291 refusals to give evidence, and 2,451 acquittals. The sentences for contumacy complete the total. Out of the 9,600 individuals condemned summarily 1,891 profited by a favourable opinion of the Commission of Pardons united with M. Thiers by the National Assembly (law of June 17th, 1871). The councils of war ceased their duties on the 31st of December, 1875.

For years the tribune of the Assembly itself was silent. And yet there were present there representatives of Paris, men who knew the population, its faults, its violence, but also its illusions, its sufferings, its fits of bewilderment. MM. Henri Brisson and Louis Blanc, it is true, deposited propositions for amnesty at the tribune in September, 1871, and July, 1872. But these initiatives were looked upon as mere manifestations. The meeting of a new Assembly

was wanted; the words and authority of M. Gambetta were wanted in order that a full and complete amnesty might be obtained nine years afterwards.

Was then indulgence impossible? Were hearts inaccessible to pity? No. An explanation must be found for this strange hardness of heart.

When one part of the nation rises against the nation itself, and that, too, in the presence of the stranger, an unexampled frenzy takes possession of the whole social body. It fears its end. It is convulsed before the imminent danger. It strikes at the elements which are separating themselves. It strikes at itself, and blindly inflicts on itself the cruellest wounds. Its wrath is but slowly appeased.

Paris cruelly expiated the faults into which she was hurled by light-headed men and criminals. Paris lost 80,000 citizens.

After the heroism and sufferings of the siege Paris did not deserve so cruel a fate.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

The Reconstitution of the Army—Review of June 29, 1871—Legislative Work; the Municipal and Departmental Laws—The Parties—Sequel to the Fusion; the Dreux Agreement—Abrogation of the Laws of Exile and Validation of the Princes of Orleans—Supplementary Elections of July 2, 1871—The Comte de Chambord in France; Manifesto of July 5; the Question of the Flag—The Petition of the Bishops—Opening of the Gambetta Campaign against the Constituent Power of the National Assembly—The Rivet Constitution of August 31, 1871

I

WHILE Paris was given up to the convulsions of the insurrection, and the severities of the suppression, the Assembly at Versailles, under the lofty guidance of M. Thiers, devoted itself alternately to a double task; on the one side, that which had been defined by M. Thiers with the clearness of his judgment and the precision of his language: to conclude the definitive peace, and re-establish the country; on the other side, that which it imposed on itself: to found a new system of Government. A singular contrast marked the sittings devoted to these two orders of work: the one, peaceful and laborious, the others restless and disturbed.

M. Thiers followed this vast toil and watched over this burning agitation; attentive, however, to the negotiations which were in progress with Prince Bismarck, and to the measures which ensured the victory over the insurrection.

Aspect of Versailles during the Commune

The first days spent at Versailles had been full of anxiety and disorder. Paris and France had rushed thither at full speed.

It had been necessary to organize a dormitory for deputies in the great gallery of the palace; requisitions were made upon the inhabitants to lodge the representatives of the people, the members of the executive, the whole body of men which surrounds a Government. It was necessary to stand in file to get food at the restaurants.

The peaceful town of the Great King was filled with an active, stirring, intriguing crowd, a singular mixture in which classes were drawn together by the catastrophe, wealth touched elbows with poverty, everybody asked, offered, offered himself, made proposals, and in which, according to the French character, zeal itself at times occasioned agitation and embarrassment.

M. Thiers had to disentangle himself from the midst of this tumult. He was equal to everything, sometimes supported, sometimes hampered and crossed by the Assembly.

On the whole the Assembly was hard-working and, when not over-excited by political passions, practical and reasonable. Its double activity must be carefully distinguished: the one, more noisy, astonishing and often irritating the public, the other creating a new order, whole solid foundations and wise proportions will be recognized by the future.

Reconstitution of the Army

The first task, the highest and most lofty of all which occupied the Assembly, was the reconstitution of the army. The army conquered at Sedan and at Metz was for the most part in prison in Germany. According to the clauses of the preliminaries these men were to be repatriated with the shortest delay. M. Thiers obtained from the Emperor William the concession that the work of liberation should be hastened as much as possible. In old uniforms, worn, patched, with all the seams re-fitted, officers and soldiers came to place themselves "at the disposal of M. Thiers." This was their own phrase.

On disembarking from the ships, or on leaving the trains which brought them back to France, the soldiers were immediately marched to the camps where they were embodied, and thence to Versailles. Before the end of March the army at Versailles counted 80,000 men. On the 7th of April it had a strength of 100,000 men. A little later its effective was placed at 120 and then at 150,000 men. M. Thiers decided to place this army under the orders of Marshal MacMahon, who had retired to Saint-Germain with his wound cured. The offer was made by the President in the course of a visit which the Marshal paid him at Versailles. The latter modestly replied that he, having been defeated, his appointment might give rise to criticism. "Defeated," said M. Thiers to him, "everybody has been so. As for criticism, it is my part to reply to that."

In the mind of M. Thiers this rapid reorganization had other advantages. It permitted France to resume immediately her rank among the Powers. It gave more weight to her words, if there arose an

occasion for resisting the sometimes disquieting demands of the victor.

Review at Longchamps June 29

M. Thiers was not afraid to make a declaration of the authority thus recovered. In presence of the enemy still in occupation of the north and east of Paris, in presence of the Foreign Representatives, and the mandatories of France, M. Thiers held at Longchamps on the 29th of June, 1871, a solemn review of the troops of the French Army, "always faithful to all its duties, always faithful to the law," he said, "restored to its discipline, its fine bearing, its duty."

This ceremony took place in the middle of a great crowd manifesting its patriotic joy with dignity. On the right of the army had been placed the fragments of the 54th regiment of the line, an heroic little band which had defended Bitche and preserved it for France. The army mustered no less than one hundred and twenty thousand men "not yet provided with uniforms, but in full campaign dress, confident and full of spirit." Fifteen thousand horsemen, a large complement of artillery, which already displayed its new armaments, arranged in deep masses on the wings of the infantry, formed a magnificent spectacle.

"In the former Imperial tribune," relates M. Hector Pessard, "M. Thiers, erect, bare-headed, with M. Grévy, President of the Assembly, on his right, on his left M. Jules Simon, the man of his choice, surrounded by deputies, during the whole duration of the march past, kept biting his lips, kneading the palms of his hands with his fingers, his eyes moist, lowering and raising his spectacles, hardly master of himself, shifting his feet, marking step to the march of the trumpets, and drawing

himself up at times with incomparable dignity. But when, after the review, Marshal MacMahon came alone into the reserved enclosure to salute the Head of the Executive Power, M. Thiers could no longer control his emotion.

"He came down hurriedly to meet the Marshal, took him by the hands, tried to speak, could not produce a word from his swelling breast, and trembling, pale, and beaming at once, he burst into convulsive sobs, while great tears flowed over the face of the victor of Magenta, glanced from his gold and silver stars, and fell, warm, upon the sleeves of 'the little tradesman.' This embrace could not be seen by the crowd, but it must have divined and associated itself with it, for it put all its soul into the formidable shout with which it hailed the two patriots." [1]

M. Thiers has himself said: "It was the joy of a happy convalescence on a day of splendid weather."

Let us add at once that M. Thiers did not declare himself satisfied with such a result, and that he went on methodically with his task.

In the message which six months later he addressed to the National Assembly on the 7th of December, 1871, he could announce that the work was nearly finished. "When it is so," he said, "we shall have 150 regiments of infantry, a number which we have never yet reached, which will permit us to embody the considerable force of 600,000 infantry in regiments of 3,000 men in the field and 1,000 at the depôt. With these 150 regiments we shall be able to form thirty-seven to thirty-eight divisions always organized, which will never require the crea-

[1] Hector Pessard, *Mes Petits Papiers* (p. 153).

tion of fresh staffs at the moment of entering upon a campaign, for staffs cannot be improvised, and every staff made at the opening of a war may be considered as valueless. Our artillery receiving a corresponding development will soon represent the proportions of one gun to every 1,000 men."

This first reconstitution of the army was the personal work of M. Thiers. He knew with unequalled skill how to take advantage of the ruins which were left to him. We shall soon follow him in the efforts which he had to make to raise a new edifice. There he was seconded by the active assistance and the happy initiatives of the great Parliamentary Commission of which the reporter was M. de Chasseloup-Laubat, and which prepared the new military organization of which it has been said in a happy phrase, "that it was decided on and realized in virtue of a spontaneous agreement between the patriots of all parties."

M. Thiers thought that the time had come to remodel his ministry. He already felt in the Assembly resistances with which he would have to reckon. M. E. Picard left the Ministry of Home Affairs to become the occupant of the French Legation in Belgium. General Le Flô was appointed Ambassador to Russia, and replaced at the War Office by General de Cissey. M. Lambrecht became Minister of Home Affairs, and M. Victor Lefranc, a Republican of long standing, received the portfolio of Commerce.

The Parliamentary Commissions

This first period of the session of the National Assembly might be called the era of the Commissions: "There were at one time," reports M. Jules Simon, "fifty-two Commissions at work at the same time, some of them

consisting of thirty members."[1] The vast labour of re-casting to which the Assembly was in duty bound to devote itself was prepared in these inquiries and consigned to those minutes and reports which have not all seen the light, but in which, some day perhaps, French parliamentary tradition will recognize its real foundations.

In any case, at its opening meetings the National Assembly was animated by a Liberal spirit. M. Thiers styled it: "The most Liberal Assembly that he had known." Thus on the 15th of April, 1871, it voted, upon a remarkable report of the Duc de Broglie, a law restoring the cognisance of misdemeanours of the Press to the juries. It applied itself with singular vigour to the study of the great laws of organization, the law of associations[2] (which, it is true, came to nothing), the law of municipal organization, the law of Departmental organization.

In the region of administrative reorganization many members of the National Assembly wished to apply the programme of Nancy, drawn up in 1863 by a Congress in which sat Republicans, Legitimists, and Orleanists, and which tended to reduce the authority of the central power.

The Nancy programme

The authors of the Nancy programme had formulated the four following propositions:—

1. To strengthen the Commune, which hardly existed, by rendering it obligatory upon the executive to choose the mayors from the lists of the municipal Councils, and by withdrawing from the administration the tutelage of the Communes;

[1] Jules Simon, *Le Gouvernement de M. Thiers*, t. ii. p. 7.

[2] The minutes of this Commission have been edited by M. Guillaume de Chabrot.

2. To create the Canton which had no administrative existence;

3. To suppress the *arrondissement*, which corresponded to nothing;

4. To emancipate the Department.

This programme was vague and insufficient. It brought a vast social problem to the proportions of an administrative question; it diminished the philosophical range of the observation formulated by M. Ernoul in a celebrated phrase: "Do you not feel that in France the extremities are cold?"

Such as it was, it was to serve as the basis of the discussion.

The Communal Question

The communal question was first of all attacked. The events in Paris gave it a tragic actuality. Further the Commune[1] is the social molecule: the organization of the Commune should be the first care of the legislator.

When after the 18th of March the mayors of Paris and the deputies of the Seine, who held out against the Central Committee, demanded municipal elections, the Government not wishing to legislate exclusively for Paris brought forward a Bill dealing with the whole country.

Agreement was easily arrived at on the provisions of the law, which decided that municipal elections should take place immediately in all the communes; that citizens should be electors at the age of twenty-one, and eligible at twenty-five; that the municipal mandate should last three years; lastly, that the right of municipal suffrage should be acquired after one year's domicile in the Commune.

[1] TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—The Commune in country districts corresponds with the English civil parish: we have attempted to restore parish-councils for reasons similar to those given in the text.

One difficulty alone cropped up with reference to the constitution of the municipalities. The Government and the Commission demanded the retention of clause 10 of the law of July 3, 1848, which left to the executive the appointment of the mayor in the capital towns of Departments or *arrondissements*, and in communes of more than 6,000 inhabitants. Everywhere else the appointment of the mayor belonged to the Municipal Council.

At the division of the 8th of April, 1871, the Assembly decided by 285 to 275 that the Municipal Councils should elect the mayors from among their members without exception. M. Thiers demanded with extreme vivacity that this clause should be amended. He thought that the central Government ought to have its representative in the bosom of all important municipalities. He declared to the Assembly that it was depriving him of the means of governing, and of ensuring order, and let it be understood that if his view was not adopted he would not retain power.

The alarm was keen.

The majority of the Chamber made the sacrifice of its sympathies in favour of decentralization to the necessities of the occasion. An amendment of compromise was adopted by a sitting and standing vote, providing that "the appointment of mayors and deputy-mayors should take place provisionally by decree of the Government in the towns of more than twenty thousand souls, and in the chief towns of Departments or *arrondissements*." Only four hundred and sixty communes were thus placed outside the common right.

The situation of Paris was defined. By the

terms of the Municipal law of April 14, 1871, Paris has a Municipal Council composed of four members to each ward, elected by single ballot in each quarter. At the opening of each session this Council elects a president, vice-president and secretary. In the different wards a mayor and deputies are named by decree of the Executive Power.

These arrangements have raised constant protests since their existence from the municipal Councils and universal suffrage of Paris. Paris has not ceased to claim her "autonomy." However, for thirty years the law of 1871 has been the charter of Paris, and it now borrows from its long duration an authority which very few organic laws can claim in our country.

The Question of the Departments

After the Commune the Department. It was, in fact, an urgent matter to re-establish the General Councils, which had been dissolved all over France by a decree of the Delegation of Bordeaux. The organization of the Departments was the object of a law sent to committee in the spring of 1871, but it was not passed till the 10th of August of that year. Due to the initiative of MM. Maguin and Bethmont it was submitted to debate on a remarkable report by M. Waddington.

The first aim of the legislator was to emancipate the Department. He tried to remedy the criticism formulated in 1862 by the Comte de Chambord against the internal system of Government imposed on France since the constitution of the year VIII. "The country for which they aimed to secure representation," he said, "was only organized for the purposes of administration."

Here again, M. Thiers fought the decentralizing

tendencies of the majority. Like the great ministers of the Monarchy, like the men of the Revolution, he was subject to a constant preoccupation for the "indivisibility" of the nation. France, inhabited by a population of different origins, subject on her frontiers to the attraction of neighbouring Powers, can only preserve her power, and perhaps her existence, by making constant sacrifices to the cause of unity. Thus M. Thiers, in the course of these debates, fought every measure, whose result might have been to enfeeble the mainspring of politics, and the authority of the centre. He had been struck by the separatist tendencies shown in certain regions in the course of recent events, and notably by the *Ligue du Midi*.

On both sides concessions were made; common labour and common good will ended, on the 10th of August, 1871, in the passing, by a vote of 509 to 126, of one of the best organic laws of the third Republic, the law on the organization of the General Councils.

The General Councils

The characteristic features of this legislative measure is that it ensures in the Department the authority and permanence of a local Assembly elected by universal suffrage. The General Council holds its ordinary session automatically each year in August, without the necessity of a summons from the central power. The General Councils are renewed in full right by one half every three years, which ensures to these Assemblies the spirit of continuity necessary to a good administration. A Departmental Committee, a delegation from the General Council, subsists in the intervals between the sessions to control and guide the prefect; it is invested directly, by this

law, with a certain number of attributes, most of which have to do with the budget.

The law grants to the General Council publicity in its sittings; assigns to it the settlement of the divisions of the Communes for municipal elections; leaves it the right of associating itself with one or more General Councils to discuss their common interests; that of issuing non-political petitions; of meeting extraordinarily on the demand of two-thirds of its members; the right of dissolution of the central power with reference to General Councils can never be exercised as a general measure.

Another law voted on the 15th of February, 1872, was in the sequel still further to increase the political importance of the General Councils by assigning to an Assembly of their delegates—two to each Council—the right of seizing temporarily executive and legislative powers in the case in which the holders of these powers might be prevented from exercising them.

Thus was constituted in each of our Departments an organization with powers of decision and control, which in part discharges the work and responsibilities of the State, which diminishes the excessive authority of the administration, which accustoms the citizens to an exact knowledge of public interests, and to the management of affairs. Since it has existed on this footing the institution of General Councils has given no room for complaint; it has rendered inestimable services, services insufficiently esteemed, by assuring the good management of the Departments, and by contributing to the general stability of institutions.

II

The wisdom with which the National Assembly;

directed by M. Thiers, applied itself to the work of national reconstitution was unhappily disturbed by the rumbling of political passions. The terrible interlude of the Commune had rendered only more acute the constitutional crisis from which the country was suffering.

The parties were face to face, more ardent than ever, and each of them found arguments in favour of the thesis which it sustained in the events which were taking place.

Mgr. Dupanloup and the Fusion

The enterprise of the *fusion* began at Bordeaux, continued with singular activity and kept those who followed its daily work, breathing, or disturbed. Its foreman worker at the present moment was Mgr. Dupanloup.

Mgr. Dupanloup had a separate physiognomy, in the French episcopate, among men like Pie, Darboy, Matthieu, Bonnechose. He was a man of imposing gait, well set up, with a broad face, an eagle nose, a high colour; he breathed action. He was compared with Bossuet. He had at least this point of resemblance with Bossuet, that he was energetically attached to Gallican ideals. Like his illustrious model he willingly mixed in the affairs of the world. He had lived among that generation which, following Chateaubriand and Lamennais, had been so profoundly moved by the double problem of religion and liberty. A friend of Montalembert, Lacordaire, Gratry, he had even been Renan's teacher at the school of Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonneret. The latter has traced in his *Souvenirs* a portrait of Mgr. Dupanloup, whose features, though a little blurred, are faithful. The young abbé had been brought to the death-bed of Talleyrand by aristocratic influences and had carried

or obtained the recantation of the old disciple of Machiavelli, till then impenitent. His success dates from this hour: "Worldly, lettered, as little of a philosopher as a man can be, not a bit of a theologian. . . ." "There was neither the fine imagination which ensures a lasting value to certain works of Lacordaire or Montalembert, nor the deep passion of Lamennais; humanism, good education were here the aim, the end, the limit of everything; the favour of well-educated people in good society became the supreme criterion of the good." Hard-working, active, authoritative, he saw things rapidly, and thought he saw them with elevation. "I think," said an honest friend of his, "that our great bishop does and undertakes too many things to be able to get to the bottom of them."[1]

However, by the authority of age, and the habit of business, Mgr. Dupanloup had won authority; he even enjoyed that kind of halo which is sometimes given to these distinguished favourites of fortune by an irremediable check; the attitude which he had taken at the Vatican Council had alienated the Court of Rome and Pope Pius IX from him for ever. It was known that he would never be a cardinal, and he thus shone with the light of the purple which he never wore. He had held in his priestly hands the souls of the great ones of this world without ever forgetting the mutual consideration which exalted persons who wish to be equally respected owe to one another. He had given the Comte de Chambord his first lessons in the catechism; he had prepared the Prince de Joinville for his first communion; Marshal Mac-

[1] Martial Delpit, p. 208.

Mahon sought his advice; he had ties with M. Thiers; the Duc de Broglie had drawn up under his roof the manifesto of the *Correspondant* on the subject of the Council.[1]

With his fingers on so many springs he thought that duty required him to regulate and combine their motions. He led the last campaign of the expiring Monarchy at Versailles, as he had guided the last campaign of dying Gallicanism at the Council of the Vatican; doomed to a double defeat in France, as at Rome, and missing in succession the two-fold careers, successively attempted, of a Bossuet or a Richelieu.

We remember his first efforts at Bordeaux and Biarritz. Aided by General Ducrot and M. Estancelin, he had established a first understanding between the Legitimist party, and the Princes of the House of Orleans. The work of agreement was completed towards the end of the month of March at Dreux, whither the Princes had betaken themselves after the transference of the Assembly to Versailles. In the presence of MM. de Cumont and de Meaux, mandatories of the Legitimist party, the Duc d'Aumale affirmed that if France wished to restore Royalty, no Royalist competition would be raised from among the Princes of the Orleans family. "1830," he said, "was a fatal date for the monarchy, we will not try it again." He was willing that the Comte de Paris should make a solemn advance to the Comte de Chambord with the object of affirming the reconciliation of the House of France. The *Cercle des Réservoirs* (this was the plenary meeting of the

[1] *Souvenirs du Vicomte de Meaux.*

Right) should fix the place and time for the interview between the "King" and his cousin.

In return the Legitimists were to lend their help to the vote cancelling the laws of exile, and to the validation of the election of the Princes.

M. Thiers and the Plans of Fusion

This time it was thought that the fusion was really there. Up to this point M. Thiers, who had very little faith in it, had let things go their way, knowing the difficulties of the agreement too well not to be convinced that it would break down in the end.

However, on the 8th of May, 1871, there appeared a letter from the Comte de Chambord to M. de Carayon-Latour, which ended with this famous phrase: 'The word is with France, and the hour is with God." It was wished to interpret this enigma in a sense favourable to the fusion. M. Thiers was on the point of attempting a last effort against the Commune. He took fright, or at least he lost his temper. This is the time when he made such a sharp reply to M. Mortimer-Ternaux, and when he began to allude to his own pledges in favour of the Republic.

He had never been a Legitimist; he did not like the Comte de Chambord, whom he accused of failing in respect to him. He thought him a "sniveller"; he said of him to his intimate friends: "Chambord married, along with a princess of Modena, the ideals of exaggerated devotion and irreconcilable policy, of that House, one of the most backward in Europe."

On the other hand, although he had long-standing associations in favour of the Orleans family, he did not see any prospects in it. The Republicans and the Legitimists formed a strong majority against it. "To favour a restoration," he has himself

said, "would have been not only a failure in loyalty on my part, but furthermore a violation of my duties towards France, whom it was my mission to pacify by preventing party struggles."

Seriously anxious this time, he decided to bring about the collapse of a plan, which would have restored the heir of the Princes overthrown in July 1830, thus giving a formal contradiction to the political life of the whole of his generation. If a choice was inevitable, M. Thiers remained faithful to his whole life in ranging himself "on the side of the Revolution."

The game then between the chiefs of the Royalist party, having the fusion for their programme, and M. Thiers, having for his programme the affirmation of the provisional Republic, opened at very close quarters. The weak point in the play of the Monarchists of the Assembly was the uncompromising attitude of the Legitimists pure, of the "light cavalry."[1] In the game of M. Thiers the weak point was the mistrust of the Republicans. It must, however, be recognized that there was more wisdom and pliancy among the allies of M. Thiers than among those of Mgr. Dupanloup.

The working of M. Thiers was two-fold; on the one side, he skilfully maintained the divisions in the camp of the Monarchists. He addressed himself especially to the Legitimists and put them on their guard: "If we do not," said he, "postpone the validation of the Princes, you are lost." Even in the Orleanist party he excited feelings of distrust on the subject of the somewhat enigmatical attitude of the Duc d'Aumale, and the Prince de Joinville. He bewailed

[1] Hector Pessard, *Mes Petits Papiers*, p. 67.

in advance the lot of the Comte de Paris: "The Duke of Gloucester had nephews also," he insinuated, "and he became Richard III."

The Rivet Law.

But not satisfied with shaking his opponents by dividing them, he brought a policy of results to meet them. He laboured to consolidate the provisional arrangement which was the object of their attack, and to give it a kind of stability. Already on the 16th of April one of his friends, M. Rivet, had proposed at a group meeting to give the head of the State the title of President of the Republic for three years. M. Thiers from that time juggled that card with superior art. He kept it at first suspended, asking his friends to postpone any proposal till after the taking of Paris.

The work of the fusion was then in full blast. M. de Kerdrel had disclosed the game on the 27th of April by these words, delivered in reply to a speech from M. Thiers: "It would be a misfortune to let the country believe that we are in absolute doubt as to the institutions which suit it."

A month afterwards, on the morrow of the Commune, the Right thought itself so sure of success that the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, always keen and sometimes imprudent, demanded with vivacity the fixing of the nearest date for the supplementary elections, which were to fill one hundred and eleven vacant seats: "France," he said, "must make a great protest against Socialist doctrines."

But first it was wished to strike a heavy blow; it was necessary to keep the pledges which, in reference to the Princes of Orleans, were the first act in the fusion. On the 2nd of June, 1871, various plans for the repeal of the laws of exile were put before the Assembly.

On the 15th of May the Princes had thought that the hour had come for having a full explanation with M. Thiers on this subject. The Duc d'Aumale had recourse to the agency of one of his most devoted friends, who was also in intimate relations with M. Thiers, and Comte d'Haussonville the elder. In the month of September 1870, at the time when the empire had just fallen, M. Thiers had used M. d'Haussonville as an intermediary to advise the Princes to return to France. Although the Count had since held discreetly aloof and was not a member of the National Assembly, he was clearly marked out to resume the intercourse. Furnished with letters from the Duc d'Aumale and the Comte de Paris, he came to Versailles, was received by M. Thiers, and had a double interview with him on the 17th and 18th of May.

Interview between M. Thiers and Comte d'Haussonville

The Princes begged M. Thiers to inform them of his attitude on the subject of their position. As a basis of discussion, M. d'Haussonville referred in their name to a programme, which had already been considered at Bordeaux by the agency of M. Crugy, and which dealt with the following points: I. validation of the elections; II. repeal of the laws of exile; III. request for leave, if there is occasion; IV. resignation after the vote of repeal.

M. d'Haussonville pleaded the cause of the Princes warmly. He made an appeal to the past of M. Thiers, and to the sentiments which united him with the Orleans family. It must not be forgotten that this was the time when M. Thiers, on the point of vanquishing the Commune, had taken "the pledges" to the delegates of provincial towns, to which he alluded in the debate raised by

M. Mortimer-Ternaux. He was perhaps still more explicit in his reply to the Comte d'Haussonville. He declared that his personal sentiments were more favourable to an *English* than to an *American* solution; but he immediately added that, at that time, he saw no other way out except the Republic. He alluded to the divisions in the royal family, expressed himself severely on the subject of the Comte de Chambord, paraded the Bonapartist spectre, and added: "In order to produce cohesion everywhere, the Republican form seems to me to be the best for the present. I am inclined to think that we must make it last out so long as circumstances shall remain the same, one year, two years, who knows? The time to reorganize."

M. Thiers refuses to intervene

In the interview which took place on the following day, the 18th of May, M. Thiers, driven into his last entrenchments by the very firm insistence of M. d'Haussonville, was still more definite: "So long as I keep the power, I am obliged to maintain it in the conditions in which I received it . . . My loyalty itself is at stake, and it is to cast a doubt upon it to solicit me to favour one of the various solutions to which it is supposed, according to the fancy of each individual, that the country might one day turn. I am like a trustee; I must render back intact and preserved from any injury the deposit which has been confided to me. I cannot enter into any arrangement for the advantage of any one, whoever he may be." He expressed himself in a calm voice, in tranquil and deliberate tones; his utterance was hurried only when he spoke of the Princes.

His interviewer was a man of intellect; as he

says of himself, "though deaf, he was not blind." He understood. In giving an account to the Duc d'Aumale of the mission with which he had been charged, he left the Princes no illusions as to the attitude of the former Minister of King Louis Philippe.

On the 20th of May the understanding, previously outlined, was sealed between the Legitimist party and the Orleanist party. The Duc d'Aumale himself confirmed this agreement by a letter addressed to the Comte d'Haussonville, but which was to be laid before the eyes of the chiefs of the Legitimist party. He commented on this letter in the following terms: "If the question of the competence of the ancient dynasties is raised, we refuse to engage ourselves on this ground, which is the reserved ground, the constitutional ground. But on the right and on the left we can affirm that in the branch of Orleans there are *neither Pretenders nor competitors*." These are the expressions which the Comte de Paris was to reproduce later on in his interview with the Comte de Chambord.[1]

Wrath of M. Thiers

As soon as he received information of the plans for a parliamentary initiative with reference to the Princes, M. Thiers flew into a violent passion. "You are madmen," he said to M. Bocher in the lobbies of Versailles; "the Princes of Orleans mean to play the part of Louis Napoleon in 1849." Fearing that this was the first step towards a restoration, he said to the Marquis de Castellane: "I have always declared, if they make a Monarchy, there is only one possible Monarchy: the united Monarchy." Then gesti-

[1] *Journal inédit de M. le Comte d'Haussonville.*

culating in the middle of a group of deputies, he added: "How is it proposed that I should govern with the Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly, Henri V at Chambord, Napoleon at Prangins?" The subject was dropped.

The proposal for repeal of the laws of exile, signed by the Legitimist and Orleanist deputies, encircled under the same term "House of Bourbon," the Princes of Orleans and the Comte de Chambord. M. Henri Brisson, deputy of the Seine, underlined the fact, and M. Baragnon confirmed this comment by saying that "the expression employed by the authors of this proposal might be replaced by another and more accurate term: the House of France."

On a favourable report made by M. Batbie, the proposal came forward for debate on the 8th of June, 1871. M. Thiers had reflected. He could not come to an open quarrel with the Assembly on the morrow of the entrance of the troops into Paris. What he feared above everything was a new crisis which would throw the country back into disorder at the very moment when he had just rescued it from anarchy.

Besides, he had confidence in the result of the approaching elections, and he understood that his first duty was to gain time; for that purpose he showed himself disposed, according to his own expression, to "Put up with all the mortifications."

M. Thiers fights the Proposals for Repeal

He then made one of his most remarkable speeches. Recalling, according to his customary process, the state in which he had found France, he showed that it was not sufficient to have re-established order in the

streets, that it was also necessary to re-establish "moral order" in the minds of men, that famous "moral order" which was to be made a battle-cry later on. After having subjected the national conscience to this catechism, the Head of the Executive Power drew the attention of the Assembly to the dangers of a Governmental crisis at the time when an appeal was being made to credit, in order to execute the hard conditions imposed by the victor on the liberation of the territory. He called up his prophetic answer to Prince Louis Napoleon: "these people recall you; they do not know what they are doing. You are going to become their master, but you will never be mine." He warned public opinion against a Monarchical *coup d'état* more or less disguised. "If solutions were prematurely forced," he said, "France would be cast back into an immediate civil war."

That is why he returned again to the Bordeaux Compact as a political programme, not without accentuating, nevertheless, his sympathies for the Republic.

"I will not betray it," he said, thus undeceiving those who imagined that he would consent to be the instrument of the Restoration. And he added that: "a loyal experiment of the Republic is necessary before raising the Monarchy."

Knowing the ideals of the Comte de Chambord, M. Thiers delivered a blow at him straight from the shoulder by making the Assembly applaud his historic formula in the *National* of 1830: "The Princes must be good enough to recognize the fact that the monarchy is fundamentally a Republic with an hereditary President."

After having said what he thought, and what

was at his heart, he concluded by accepting the Bill, but taking note of the undertaking made with him by the Princes not to sit in the Assembly. He added further, that he did not accept this solution with perfect good will. With full solemnity he took Europe and France to witness as to the constraint imposed upon him, and the imprudence which was being committed: "I find no fault with the Princes," he said, "but Providence has attached to their persons an insuperable situation, and I should say to them, if I had the right to address any advice to them, that their dignity depends on not abdicating. God has made them Princes, they must remain Princes to keep the moral authority which they need. But He attaches incontestable difficulties to this situation, and I asked myself if I should not commit an error in restoring the territory to them. I said to myself that one thing alone could excuse me, and that was to warn my country. I do so!"

After this speech 472 votes to 97 out of 569 voters passed the repeal of the laws of exile. Then, without debate, the validation of the elections of the Duc d'Aumale and the Prince de Joinville was voted by 448 to 113.

These votes provoked a lively emotion in public opinion. They were generally interpreted as a preface to the restoration. And it is a fact that in the course of a reception of the Princes, organized in the house of M. Bocher at the end of the session of the 8th of June, the politicians of the party decided to send an address to the Comte de Chambord, begging him to return to France.

On the other hand, in contesting the Bill as he had contested it, and in imposing upon the validation of the Princes the restriction which

The Republican Party draws near to M. Thiers

he had imposed on it, M. Thiers had given such pledges to the Republican party that it no longer hesitated to take him as its chief. M. Gambetta, who was still in the eyes of the Right an enthusiast, a demagogue, and to whom was always applied the very appellation which had been let fly at him by M. Thiers, "the raving lunatic," set an example of patience and moderation in the speech which he delivered on the 26th of June in pushing his candidature in the Department of the Seine. He himself adhered to the formula of M. Thiers: "You wish to govern the Republic; you wish to found it; well! we only ask you to recognize it. When once you have recognized it, we accept your elevation to the charge of affairs. We wish to exhibit this spectacle of Republicans by birth who remain in the opposition in the face of Monarchists converted and compelled by the cohesion of the Republican party and the legality of the Republic to accomplish the reforms which it demands. He repeated with approval the formula of M. Thiers: "To the wisest, to the worthiest." He said to the Republican party: "The heroic age, the age of chivalry is over." He further said: "Let us be a practical party, a party of Government." He added: "We must know how to be patient, to fasten ourselves upon a reform; it is necessary that this reform should be immediately realizable, and that we should confine ourselves to it, till it is realized." This is already the programme which was called "opportunist" later on, this programme "at once Conservative and Radical"; it is these very expressions, inscribed in the speech of June the 26th, which gave confidence in universal suffrage, waver-

ing the day before, and which snatched from it the electoral manifestation of the 2nd of July, 1871, of which it can be said that it was the real foundation of the Republic.

III

Elections of the 2nd of July

The number of deputies to be replaced amounted to 111, twenty-one of these for the Department of the Seine. As the ballot was by list, forty-six Departments were called upon to give their opinion.

One hundred elections went to Republicans of all shades, most of them supporting themselves on the programme of M. Thiers. The other elected candidates had styled themselves Conservatives without avowing opinions officially Monarchist. In Paris five Republicans were elected. The sixteen other new deputies of the capital belonged to the Conservative list; but among them appeared men rallied to the Republic, who had not taken a line against it; five only were decided Monarchists. In thirty-nine Departments the Republicans won a brilliant triumph.

One fact was characteristic above all in this ballot; twenty-five elections had been held to replace M. Thiers, who had been elected in twenty-six Departments and had chosen the Seine. Three of these Departments alone, the Dordogne, Loiret, and Vienne elected a Royalist and two Conservatives.

The Bonapartists had reappeared on the stage. Prince Napoleon had launched a manifesto in the form of a letter to M. Jules Favre: "The only basis upon which a government can rest its principles in France, the only source from which it can

draw legality and strength, is the appeal to the people." MM. Rouher, Ernest Dréolle, Baron Jérôme David had offered themselves as candidates, but had not been elected.

Among the newly elected were observed: MM. Beausire (Vendée), Cazot (Gard), Denfert-Rochereau, the defender of Belfort, (Isère, Charente, and Doubs), Pascal Duprat (Landes), Duvergier de Hauranne (Cher), Faidherbe (Nord, Pas-de-Calais, Somme), Fourcand (Gironde), Gambetta (Var), Goblet (Somme), Naquet (Vaucluse), Schérer (Seine-et-Oise), etc.

The Importance of these Elections

The importance of this electoral manifestation cannot be exaggerated. It occurred at the decisive moment. The partisans of the fusion had made a supreme effort to give the country the spectacle of a united Royal family, and to spread the faith in an approaching restoration. Mgr. Dupanloup had betaken himself in person to the Duc d'Aumale at Chantilly, and had obtained from him declarations which were considered to be formal: "There is only one family, let there be only one Monarchy. The Comte de Paris is going to ask for the day, the place, and the hour, which will suit the Comte de Chambord."

The Comte de Chambord was at Bruges preparing to come to France. The Comte de Paris came to Dreux, and from thence he wrote to the Comte de Chambord on the 30th of June, declaring that he was ready to visit the head of his house. This step had been arranged in concert by MM. de Jarnac and de Lutteroth in the name of the Princes of Orleans, and M. de la Ferté in the name of the Comte de Chambord. As soon as he had received

his cousin's letter the Comte de Chambord left Bruges and came to France. The elections were being held at that very time. Now, a note dated from Blois on the 2nd of July, replies in these terms to the application of the Comte de Paris :

The Comte de Chambord has been happy to hear the expression of the desire which the Comte de Paris has manifested of being received by him.

The Comte de Chambord is in France. The moment that he had himself indicated is then come to make explanations on certain questions hitherto reserved.

He hopes that nothing in his language will be an obstacle to this union of the House of Bourbon which has always been his dearest wish.

Loyalty determines, none the less, that the Princes, his cousins, should be informed, and the Comte de Chambord thinks it his duty to ask the Comte de Paris to defer his visit till the day, a very near one, when he shall have made his whole way of thinking known to France. He could have wished to receive his cousin's visit at Chambord, but he deems it suitable not to prolong his stay there at this moment.

On leaving Chambord he will take the road to Bruges, where he will remain from the 8th to the 16th of July.

Thus the Comte de Chambord intended to make explanations "on certain points which had been reserved." It was then again the question of the flag which was going to be raised, at the moment when it was believed that it was going to be buried in concessions by protocols and in family effusions. The Comte de Chambord had come to France. He had wished to see the country at close quarters at the moment of making his decision. At this supreme moment of the 2nd of July, at which the heir of the kings of France and France herself pronounced themselves on each side in a decisive deliberation, he had seen with the clearness and force of an upright and disinterested mind, the error,

the grave misunderstanding, which was dissembled at the bottom of the programme of fusion. And with a firm hand, before leaving France, he tore down all the veils.

The party of fusion was unwilling to believe in so clear an insight into realities, and such honesty. It became obstinate in its wish to make a King in spite of the King. The Comte de Chambord experienced from this period very painful lacerations in his circle.

Before going to Chambord the Prince had stopped one day in Paris, where he had received several partisans, among others the Marquis de la Ferté, President of the Royalist agency at Paris. The grandson of Charles X communicated his intentions to him. M. de la Ferté multiplied his objections. He declared to the Comte de Chambord that he refused to remain the official interpreter of the policy which was about to be inaugurated by the proclamation of the white flag. The Prince lost his temper; the devoted Legitimist insisted, entreated. It was in vain. The Prince and his faithful commissioner separated never to meet again.[1] After this scene the Marquis de la Ferté ran to Versailles, when he informed his friends of the course of events. The note to the Comte de Paris, and the story told by M. de la Ferté, caused the Right of the Assembly to judge the situation as a very grave one.[2]

[1] The Comte de Chambord has left, it appears, a number of memorandum books in which he noted from day to day the facts which interested him. V. Osmont, *Reliques et Souvenirs*, p. 65. Up to now no portion of these notes has been made known to the public.

[2] Comte de Falloux, *Mémoire d'un Royaliste*, t. ii. p. 475.

A meeting was immediately improvised in one of the Committee rooms. It was decided to send to Chambord a deputation of three deputies taken from among the heirs of illustrious names of the ancient monarchy to carry an ardent petition to the Prince. The Duc de Rochefoucault-Bisaccia, the Comte de Maillé, and the Vicomte Gontaut-Biron were appointed. "Be sure and say," was the recommendation they received, "that the signature of the manifesto would be the signature of the abdication or the certain collapse of a monarchical restoration."

The presence of Mgr. Dupanloup with the Comte de Chambord seemed necessary. The Bishop was to speak in the name of religion. Old M. Laurentie and the honest and true M. de Cazenove de Pradines, whose wound received at Patay was not yet healed, also betook themselves on their side to Chambord.

The Comte de Chambord and the Partisans of Fusion

On the 5th of July the Prince received the delegates of the Assembly, then MM. Laurentie, de Cazenove de Pradines, and on the other side, Mgr. Dupanloup alone. "All," says M. de Falloux, "met with the same welcome; much courtesy, much calm, a confidence which disputed nothing, and seemed to find its resting point in a supernatural vision."[1]

With the Bishop of Orleans, the Comte de Chambord purposely silent, did not enter upon the political question; he spoke of decentralization. Mgr. Dupanloup, much embarrassed, had to allude to the manifesto on his own initiative. The Prince declared that he had exhausted the question with the delegates of the Right. He certainly took into

[1] Comte de Falloux, *Mémoires d'un Royaliste*, t. ii. p. 478.

account the fact that the check to the Monarchy would be a great misfortune to the Church; but he added that his manifesto would not bring on this misfortune, far from that.

In the presence of this language, Mgr. Dupanloup advised a simple suspension of the affair. He implored the Prince to take time, either to come to Versailles, or to summon to Chambord the deputies of all the monarchical shades of opinion in the Assembly." [1]

In the end the manifesto, dated the same day, was published on the following day. The delegates had hoped up to the last minute. On returning to Versailles they read to their colleagues the minutes which they had drawn up of this interview. "This is the suicide of the Comte de Chambord," said M. de Falloux. As for Mgr. Dupanloup he epitomizes his impressions as follows: "I have just looked on at an unexampled intellectual phenomenon. Never has such an absolute moral blindness been witnessed." The Comte de Vaussay, secretary to the Prince, had come to Versailles, and presented himself before the meeting of the Right held at the house of M. de Franclieu. Questioned by all with an anxiety easy to understand: "The King," he said, "enjoyed the calmest slumber from Chambord to Paris; for my part I could not get a moment's rest. On arriving I asked His Majesty if he had no change to make in his letter. He replied: 'No! Get it printed as it is.' I have obeyed his orders." [2] When the newspapers published the manifesto, it was imperative to submit to the evidence.

[1] Abbé Lagrange, *Vie de Mgr. Dupanloup*, t. iii. p. 232.

[2] Baron Vinols, *Mémoires*, p. 68.

The Comte de Chambord's Manifesto

After having set forth his political system: decentralization of the administration, local franchises, retention of universal suffrage, Government placed under the control of two chambers; after having hurled a fresh anathema at the Revolution, the Pretender frankly attacked the question of the flag.

The White Flag

To begin with, he declared that he was not to submit to "conditions," nor to sacrifice his honour to France. Then he added that he would not allow "the standard of Henry IV, of Francis I, of Joan of Arc, to be torn from his hands. "I received it," he went on, "as a sacred trust from the old King, my grandfather, dying in exile; for me it has always been inseparable from the memories of my absent country; it floated over my cradle, I wish it to shade my tomb." And the manifesto ended in these words: "Henri V cannot surrender the flag of Henri IV."

This document produced a lively sensation in the country and in the lobbies of the Assembly. Here and there it was understood that the Monarchy was henceforth impossible; impossible with the Comte de Chambord because he did not intend to accept the part of an "hereditary President of the Republic," and because he thought that the monarchical right ensures to the King a function, and an authority other than that of providing for the dynastic succession; impossible without the Comte de Chambord, because the Comte de Chambord by refusing to join in the fusion broke up the whole plan built upon the hypothesis of his help, that is to say, in fact, of his abdication. The descendant of the eldest branch dethroned his heirs and avenged 1830.

The mistake of the "fusionists" was in being unwilling to admit, at once, a situation so clear, one which, after what had happened in 1848, 1853, and 1857, ought to have left no doubt in their minds. They might have perceived that henceforth, if there was still perhaps a monarchical party in the Assembly, there was no longer a Pretender to place upon the throne; they should have understood that the country, possessing a clear sense of this situation, was seeking fresh paths. Far better would it have been to apply themselves at once to the work of aiding and guiding the country, instead of searching to place very dangerous barriers in its road. Thus perhaps the elements of a union might have been disentangled, of a broader "fusion," not that of a family hopelessly divided, but of a people, a nation, in which the great divisions had not yet reached their full width.

They contented themselves with meeting the most pressing emergency by the publication of a note emanating from the politicians in the Assembly, in which these last, after having registered the "sacrifice" of the Comte de Chambord, declared themselves none the less to be partisans of the hereditary and representative Monarchy, and affirmed their wish to preserve for France "the flag which she gave to herself." In one word they endeavoured to free the party while binding the King. The authors of this manifesto wilfully deceived themselves, and they tried, to very little purpose, to keep up the misunderstanding in the eyes of the country.

IV

M. Thiers was in the enjoyment of his success. He clearly felt that the Right of the Assembly,

stunned by the blow which it had just received, was no longer in the saddle. He resolved to get all the advantage he could out of the situation. A fresh imprudence committed by the parties of the Right came to his aid.

The Petition of the Bishops

In his preceding manifesto on the 8th of May the Comte de Chambord had declared himself ready to intervene to obtain effective guarantees for the independence of the papacy. At the time of the entrance of the Italians into Rome a certain number of Bishops had signed petitions demanding the intervention of the Government for the re-establishment of the temporal power of the Pope. The religious sentiments of the Right were perhaps still more robust than its monarchical principles. Let us remember that on the 13th of May, on the proposal of M. de Cazenove de Pradines, it had decided that "prayers should be said in the whole of France to entreat God to appease our civil discords, and to set a limit to the evils which afflicted us." Also it had appointed a commission favourable to the petition of the Bishops, which had ended in referring the matter "for attentive and sympathetic inquiry" to the ministry of Foreign Affairs.

But if the petition was taken into consideration, an international conflict of the most serious nature was raised with Italy. King Victor Emmanuel had said when his troops had penetrated into the city of the Popes: "We are in Rome, we shall stay there." And in any case there was a risk of throwing Italy into the arms of Germany for a considerable period.

M. Thiers was in favour of the strictest neutrality. Out of deference to the person of the Sovereign

Pontiff, he had, simply by a diplomatic leave of absence, dispensed our Minister at Florence from being present at the ceremony of taking possession of Rome as capital of Italy. "It is not I," he said, "who made the unity of Italy, it is not in my power to unmake it."

At the opening of the sitting of the 22nd of July everybody was of one mind in favour of adopting the motion of M. Marcel Barthe, thus worded: "The Assembly, confident of the patriotism and prudence of the executive power, passes to the order of the day." M. Keller, Mgr. Dupanloup themselves had rallied to this solution.

M. Gambetta thought the moment opportune for manifesting the adhesion of the Republican party to the policy of M. Thiers, and he declared that the Republicans would vote the order of the day.

Immediately M. Keller rose in the name of the Right, and in the midst of the liveliest agitation declared that, since M. Gambetta adopted the order of the day, as moved by Marcel Barthe, he, M. Keller, would vote on the opposite side. A right-about-face occurred in the disposition of the Assembly.

M. Thiers intervened in the debate with much skill. By his declarations he neutralized, as much as possible, the imprudent vote which the Assembly was on the point of declaring. The conclusions of the Commission referring the episcopal petition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were none the less voted by a majority of three hundred and fifty. On the adoption of this motion M. Jules Favre, whose situation had otherwise become difficult, sent in his resignation; he was replaced at the Quai

d'Orsay by M. de Rémusat. M. de Rémusat was a shrewd, delicate mind, "an ardent patriot, a wise politician, at times slightly mocking, a vast and open intelligence," says M. Thiers, who loved him much; although he lived in retirement, and was not a member of the Assembly, the Head of the Executive Power summoned him to his side, and confided to him the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. He became the favourite Minister in the Council.

For many of those who voted for it the order of the day which put an end to the debate on the petition of the bishops was a mistake. In the majority mutual reproaches and recriminations were the rule. Furthermore, everybody was tired of the provisional arrangement.

M. Thiers, like the skilful tactician that he was, took advantage of this hour of hesitation and disenchantment. He employed all the means in his power to hasten the passing of the Rivet proposal, which had been awaiting its time since the 15th of April. This proposal boldly put to the members of the Right the most disturbing question: Would they venture in the circumstances in which they found themselves, without a Pretender, without a policy, without a programme, to separate from M. Thiers? The day before, the Government of M. Thiers had been in danger; all of a sudden it became a resource, and almost a refuge.

M. Charles Rivet, deputy for the Corrèze, was a friend of the President's. He it was who had had at Bordeaux the idea of adding the words: "of the French Republic" to the motion constituting the Executive Power. He had then, in his own words, "driven a nail into the monarchical shoe." With

his new proposal his ambition was "to ram a bone down their throats."

A counter-proposal from M. Adnet was limited simply to the confirmation of the Bordeaux Compact. M. Thiers informed the Commission that he could only retain the mandate which had been confided to him at Bordeaux if his powers were protracted and defined. In order to make the weight which he carried felt, he was not afraid to provoke a serious incident in a field which he chose himself.

M. Thiers makes himself felt

On the 24th of August a Bill was discussed with reference to the disbanding of the National Guard. M. Thiers was at the Tribune. He was being interrupted sharply. All of a sudden he stopped spontaneously, and gave a more elevated turn to the debate: "Judging by the number of voices which are raised against my words," he said, "I think that the confidence which I need is much shaken." And in spite of lively protests, which he pretended not to hear, he made the following declaration on leaving the tribune: "I only add a single word more: I know the resolution which is imposed upon me by the scene which I survey. I have nothing more to say to the Assembly." And the official record states: "Movement, lively applause on the Left, murmurs and sudden agitation on the other benches."

Thus the incident assumed the complexion of a personal matter. M. Thiers forced the hand of the Right, put the question of confidence, and made a formal demand of the majority. The latter submitted to his authority with trembling, and on the initiative of General Ducrot, granted him,

by 488 votes, the measure for which he was asking.

The breath of the resignation of M. Thiers had been felt passing. That was enough.

In the party meetings on the evening after this sitting the choice of his successor was anxiously discussed. The names of Marshal MacMahon, the Duc d'Aumale and M. Grévy had been put forward.

The unexpected combination of these three names shows clearly enough the confusion which prevailed in men's minds. Thus all, even the most violent, bowed before the necessity of obeying the exacting will of M. Thiers. As for him, having produced the effect on which he reckoned, he yielded to the prayers of his friends and abandoned his plans of retirement. From that time the passing of the Rivet law was assured.

On the 28th of August M. Vitet read his report and the Bill was submitted to the Assembly. M. Rivet's text was amended. The powers of M. Thiers, instead of being limited to three years, were to last as long as the mandate of the Assembly. The plan thus established an entirely new procedure for the relations between the President of the Republic and the Assembly.

M. Thiers, having continued to be a deputy, had been heard up to that time on his mere request. Fearing the authority of his speeches the Commission proposed that henceforth he should speak only "after having informed the President of the Assembly of his intention." An endeavour was made to minimise the range of the vote by bringing it down to a personal question: "The clause affecting the duration of the continuance of power signifies, it was said, that apart from the case of responsibility,

that is to say, apart from occasions as solemn as they are rare, the chief of the Government continues his functions, and that the apprehensions of the public, the fear of a change of Government lightly provoked by sudden skirmishes, are not founded." Knowing the President's taste for playing the card of resignation the reporter applied the knife at the right place.

The debate opened on the 30th of April. In the course of the discussion the majority with difficulty restrained itself. The point which it detested above all in the imminent victory of M. Thiers was the affirmation of its own defeat. Passions were so keen that M. Dufaure had thought it right to ask, in the name of the Council of Ministers, for the addition of a preamble implying the confidence of the Assembly in the man whom it was going to invest with the title and lofty functions of President of the Republic. The preamble was voted by 524 votes to 36.

The situation of the Republican party was delicate. In fact, in the preambles to the Bill it was declared that " the Assembly has the right to use the constituent power, an essential attribute of sovereignty," and that " the sovereign rights of the Assembly did not suffer the least infringement by the *loyal experiment* which was being made of Republican institutions." Adherence to this proposition meant recognizing the right to the majority to dispose of the country ; it was to subscribe in advance, supposing the case to occur, to a monarchical restoration made by the Assembly at a time when the country, by the elections of the 2nd of July, was affirming its wish to maintain the Republic. On the other hand, to fight the

proposition, was to throw confusion into men's minds, perhaps irritate M. Thiers and drive him to a deplorable resignation, if a majority were formed against him.

M. Gambetta had just resumed his place in the Assembly. From that time he drew nearer to M. Thiers; however, he thought it his duty to deny the sovereign right of the Assembly and its constituent power. By a speech, frequently interrupted, he inaugurated the campaign for dissolution, which the Republican party was going to conduct against the Assembly from that time forward. M. Gambetta went so far as to say in somewhat rash words: "I would not ask for a Republic created by an Assembly without competence. . . . If a Republican constitution were to come from this place, I would not find myself armed with sufficient power, I declare it on my conscience, to strike those who should dare to attack it," so great was then the dread of a parliamentary restoration of the Monarchy among the Republicans.

This speech, important as it was by the consequences which it was destined to have in the future, acted in an inverse sense upon the Right of the Assembly. It brought the Right closer to M. Thiers. In order to prove that it had the constituent power, the Assembly hastened to constitute the Republic, provisionally, it is true, and it passed, in order to secure itself a respite, the Bill, which was presented to it by M. Thiers and his friends.

By 434 votes to 225 it declared itself constituent. By 524 to 36 it voted the preambles which recalled "the eminent services rendered to the country by M. Thiers during the last six months, and the

guarantees offered by the continuance of the power which he held from the Assembly."

Lastly, by 491 to 94, it passed the enacting part of the law:

Clause 1.—The Head of the Executive Power shall take the title of *President of the French Republic*, and shall continue to exercise under the authorty of the *National Assembly*, so long as it shall not have terminated its labours, the functions which were delegated to him by decree of February the 17th, 1871.

Clause 2.—The President of the Republic promulgates laws when they have been transmitted to him by the President of the National Assembly.

He ensures and watches over the execution of the laws.

He resides in the place where the Assembly is sitting.

He is heard by the National Assembly whenever he thinks it necessary and after having informed the President of the Assembly of his intention.

He appoints and dismisses the Ministers. The Council of the Ministers and the Ministers are responsible to the Assembly.

Each of the Acts of the President of the Republic must be countersigned by a Minister.

Clause 3.—The President of the Republic is responsible to the Assembly.

M. Thiers won the day. He epitomized his opinion of the Assembly at that time by this phrase which still smelled of battle: "I have in the Assembly 150 insurgents, and 400 cowards." He thought himself master of the morrow, at least for some time.

By a veritable piece of sleight of hand he had caused the Republic to be voted by the monarchical Right in order to outwit the Republicans. He transformed an anonymous provisional arrangement into a constitutional embryo. In his message of thanks he underlined the vote of principle by these words: "the honour which the Assembly has done me in decreeing to me *the first magistracy*

of the Republic. . . ." Those who had opposed the Bill applauded. Those who had voted for it were dissatisfied. Thus, profiting by the inexperience of a divided majority, he advanced to an end, which he did not himself fully discern, by a series of stages in which his personal interest found itself in conformity with the sentiment of the country.

He felt full of cheerfulness and confidence on the day after these struggles in which he had recovered all the pliancy, tact, authority of the old parliamentary hand. It is true that on the other side the conquered majority pared his nails and rendered more difficult for him the access to that tribune into which he mounted with such alacrity. But he relied somewhat imprudently on the text of the law which his friends had had voted; he also counted on the new services which he was going to render to the country in devoting himself to the great cause of the liberation of the territory. He was to learn, however, that parties have never been bound either by texts or services.

CHAPTER V

THE TREATY OF FRANKFORT

Towards the Definitive Peace—Intentions of Germany and France—Mission of General von Fabrice, then of General von Manteuffel—Conventions annexed to the Preliminaries—The Brussels Conferences—How the Events of the Commune weigh upon the Simultaneous Negotiations of Compiègne and Brussels—Check to the Conferences at Brussels—Interview at Frankfort between Bismarck and Jules Favre—German Ultimatum—The Definitive Peace signed at Frankfort, May 10, 1871; it aggravates the Clauses of the Preliminaries of Versailles—Debate on the Treaty of Frankfort in the National Assembly—Question of the Radius of Belfort—Ratification of the Treaty—France and Germany after the Peace—The Conferences of Frankfort—Delimitation of the New Frontier—Restoration of Diplomatic Relations between France and Germany—Mission of Saint Vallier at Nancy

I

FRANCE was a prey to civil conflicts and party-dissensions, and she was not yet assured either of her independence, or even of her existence. The foreign armies occupied nearly half the national territory. Paris was in the hands of insurrection, when the peace with Germany was not even yet concluded. We had not got further than the preliminaries signed at Versailles on the 26th of February. According to this document it was agreed that the definitive negotiations should take place as soon as possible at Brussels; that is to say, upon neutral territory.

The Definitive Negotiations for Peace

The two peoples which had just engaged in a desperate contest upon which depended for both alike territorial integrity, empire, supremacy, had one last ordeal to pass through. They were going to measure their strength afresh. But this time no longer on the field of battle. The problem was entirely intellectual and moral. It was no longer a question of one of those victories of matter, perhaps fortuitous, which are assured by a long preparation, or fortunate organization, but of one of those masterly encounters, in which mind grips mind, in which wisdom establishes a decision and foundation for the future.

On the side of France the question was to know the quality of the inner forces with which she would react against the events which had brought her down, and were still pressing on her: what her power was, and whether, at the moment when she seemed so close upon death, she would recover life and strength; what confidence she had in herself, what confidence she could inspire in others, what elasticity, what vitality. The question was to know what good faith and loyalty she could bring to the execution of her engagements, what spirit of sacrifice in accepting the consequences of her errors, what resignation in the path of sorrow upon which she was to tread, what sentiment of national solidarity; what prudence, what resources and what self-denial in dealing with the present generation with the object of guaranteeing and contriving the continued life and happiness of future generations.

As for Germany, the question was whether she was going to fulfil completely the lofty destiny

which was assured to her by the situation which she had reconquered in the centre of Europe. She had just effaced by an unparalleled effort the last trace of the Thirty Years' War; she had recovered the material greatness, the fulness of life, the exuberant vigour which had made her famous in the prosperous years of the Middle Ages. She was once again "the womb of peoples." Planted on all the great rivers, she dominated the great European interests.

With what wisdom, with what authority, with what tact—I will almost say, with what good nature —was the new Germany going to make use of this unexpected good fortune? Not to perpetuate the state of war, to inaugurate an harmonious and balanced life for Europe, to assert himself by reason rather than by might, here was an enterprise worthy of a conqueror crowned by fortune. A Saint Louis would have attempted it. A Richelieu would have faced it. Bismarck himself had given at Nikolsburg some idea of such an empire over oneself, and of a moderation so full of strength.

The period of hostilities was at an end. The exact problem which was propounded was the following: What would be the nature of the new relations between the two peoples? Peace or a succession of wars? It was necessary to choose, to take a line. The most commonplace of the solutions, the one which demanded the least intellectual exertion and the least control over self and facts, would be the system of peace under arms.

This last solution was that of the Head Quarter Staff. It had prevailed at Versailles. But a last recourse to the diplomatists was still open at Brussels. Unhappily, the deadly germ was already

laid in the text of the Convention of the preliminaries. Quite exceptional energy would have been necessary to break with the angry clauses already ratified, or, at least, exceptional skill would have been needed to modify the course of events, when the very sources were already poisoned.

Error in the German Policy

The crowning error of German diplomacy and Prince Bismarck under the circumstances arose, perhaps, from the fact that their victory took them by surprise to such a degree, that they were never willing to believe it completely assured and accomplished. Successful by means of war, they no longer had confidence in anything but war. It became their sole instrument. They prepared it without intermission. Their short-sightedness consists in not having foreseen the durability of peace. They made all calculations excepting the most simple of all. They faced all eventualities, except the normal course; so feeble is the strength of the strong man! Not believing in peace, they did not know how to organize it; it was a perpetual surprise to them, and, in one sense, a perpetual check.

Let us look at the facts:

In a hurry to return to Berlin, which he had left in August, 1870, Bismarck accredited as provisional plenipotentiary with the French Government the Saxon General Baron von Fabrice. He thus constituted in France a kind of armed legation which had its seat first at Rouen, then at Compiègne, at Soisy-sous-Étioles, at Nancy, and lastly for a little more than a month at Verdun.

Diplomacy and the Army

In creating this mechanism, at once diplomatic and military, the German Government conformed to the exigencies

of the situation. Although hostilities had come to an end, the army pressed with too heavy a weight upon events; it had too numerous and too delicate relations with the country under occupation to enable the whole authority to be withdrawn from its chiefs at a time when war was still mistress of peace.

Military Conventions

In this way several conventions appended to the preliminaries of Versailles were concluded: one regulating the restoration to the French authorities of the railway, postal, and telegraphic services, which had been requisitioned by the German authorities during the invasion; others determining the conditions of the residence of the Germans in France, the repatriation of the French prisoners; restoring to France at last the civil authority and collection of imposts in the Departments under occupation.[1]

The Conference of Brussels

Meanwhile the 7th Article of the preliminaries of Versailles stipulated the opening of negotiations for the definitive Treaty of Peace at Brussels.

M. Thiers was in a hurry to get it over. Already, on the 9th of March, 1871, he caused the names of the French plenipotentiaries to be inserted in the *Journal Officiel*: Baron Baude, accredited by the French Government at the same time as Minister to the King of the Belgians, and M. de Goulard, a member of the National Assembly and personal friend of the Head of the Executive Power. The names wanted distinction; the persons, authority. Furthermore, by the choice of M. de Goulard, M. Thiers evidently intended to keep a strong

[1] *Recueil des traités, etc., relatifs à la paix avec l'Allemagne.* Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 5 vols., gr. 8°, 1879.

hand over the definitive negotiations for peace, and perhaps here, too, to ensure, up to a certain point, a kind of collaboration of the Assembly in the labours of the Conference.

The plenipotentiaries for Germany were Count Harry von Arnim, Prussian Minister to the Holy See, and Baron von Balan, the Minister to Brussels. Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and the Grand-Duchy of Baden also appointed representatives.

The mixed Military Commission

There was further appointed a mixed military commission comprising, for France, General d'Outrelaine and Colonel Laussedat, and for Germany, General von Strantz, Hauchecorne, engineer of mines, and Herzog, government assessor. This commission was more specially charged to give its opinions on questions affecting the frontier not sufficiently defined by the Treaty of the preliminaries.

The members of the Conference met on the 24th of March, 1871.

Whatever were their mutual intentions, they were held in suspense, so to speak, by the grave event which was then happening: the outbreak of the Commune.

This fresh calamity was calculated to justify every kind of mistrust with reference to France: at the same time it gave Bismarck all the advantages. The Government of M. Thiers was about to be absorbed in the domestic struggle.

Difficulties of the Negotiations

That is not all: at the very moment when resistance to the fresh demands of the foreign negotiator was necessary, he was necessary to us. For it was necessary to ask him to hasten the repatriation of the prisoners who were to form the army summoned to suppress

the insurrection. How could it be supposed that he would not give way to suspicions only too justifiable, and that he would not abuse so favourable a situation ?

Bismarck's Points of View

From this time a double and conflicting apprehension is to be seen taking form in the mind of Bismarck, which is, perhaps, nothing but a bit of clever play ; he feared, on the one side, that a party of violence might take possession of France, and that Germany might be compelled to intervene afresh to ensure the payment of the debt of five milliards contracted with her ; he feared, on the other side, that France might recover too quickly, and that she might take advantage of some European event to hurl herself into a war of revenge before the payment of the five milliards was completed.[1] On the one or the other hypothesis the fate of this debt made him very anxious. Tossed between two causes of mistrust, he gave, he withdrew, he encouraged, he terrified, practising from that time that policy of " the hot douche and the cold douche," to which he himself gave a name in the sequel.

Did he go further ? Did he dip his fingers in the various conspiracies which were being woven in the open day, or secretly, against the Government

[1] This double sentiment is clearly expressed in the speech delivered by Prince Bismarck before the Reichstag on the 24th of April, 1871. Here are the two principal sentences : "I cannot resist the impression that the French Government would seem to cherish the hope of obtaining, later on when it has recovered strength," other conditions than at present." . . . And on the other hand " . . . If the French Government does not succeed (in suppressing the insurrection) what collections of troops will be able to be formed in France, and under whose orders ? "—*Speeches of Prince Bismarck*, vol. iii. pp. 407–410.

which was guiding France, in other respects, too, so fragile, so ephemeral. The relations of Germany with the Commune were impressed with a reserve, a courtesy, which has often been noted; the multiplication of chassepots in the hands of the insurgents, the part played by Dombrowski, some other indications have sometimes permitted suspicions, which, however, have had no definite confirmation.

Bismarck and the Commune

M. Jules Favre, who examines this question, determines in it the negative: "For my part," says he, "I do not hesitate to affirm that the German Government neither prepared nor provoked the insurrection of the Commune."[1]

One day probably we shall have more precise information on these facts, and on the skill with which Bismarck knew how to make use of the threat of a restoration of the Empire. We see clearly from the documents in the Arnim action, that this is the direction to which the sentiments of the German Court inclined, and M. Gavard says that the case was the same in England. Some day or other perhaps this phrase from the German Ambassador in Paris, Count von Arnim, will be explained: "My opinion, already expressed elsewhere, is that we ought not to repel the tentative efforts made by the Bonapartists to enter into relations with us. And that, all the less, because of all the parties, they are the only one which openly seeks our support, which inscribes reconciliation with Germany in its programme."

[1] Jules Favre, *Le gouvernement de la Défense nationale*, t. iii. p. 342.

Bismarck and the Bonapartists

A phrase confirmed by Bismarck's own: "The party of the Empire of the Bonapartes is probably the one with which one could still flatter oneself the most reasonably on the prospect of establishing tolerable relations between France and Germany."[1]

In any case, in order to produce the different effects by which he reckons to alarm, surprise and dominate the French Government, the Chancellor employs with a remarkable technical ability the different means of negotiation that he has at his disposal. The threat of an understanding, whether with the Imperial family or with the Commune, is always called into action at the right moment.

Further, the fashion in which the double conferences are conducted, on the one side at Brussels where the diplomatists meet, on the other side at Rouen with General von Fabrice; and presently at Compiègne where Von Manteuffel, replacing Von Fabrice, commands the German army of occupation, this procedure gives facilities to a double game.

It is singular to a striking degree that the military chiefs generally show themselves humane and accommodating, while the diplomatists are punctilious and exigent. Furthermore, the Emperor and Bismarck watch the game attentively from Berlin, the latter always reserving to himself the power of intervening at need and pronouncing his *quos ego*.

Bismarck and the Military party in Germany

To complete the picture it would be necessary to indicate with a still firmer pencil the situation of Prince Bismarck himself. Was the master of Europe mas-

[1] *Le Procès d'Arnim.* Plon, 1875, Rapport du 6 mai 1872, Réponse de M. de Bismarck du 12 mai, pp. 43–47.

ter of his own position? Did not the mysterious policy of the Courts at that time hamper the giant conqueror of destiny with threads spun from its spider's web?

Around the Emperor William a nervous, suspicious, insatiable party had continued itself even after the war. It was the party of the Head Quarters Staff which certainly seems at that time to have found a powerful and implacable leader in the cool Marshal von Moltke. This is the party which, as we have seen, is said to have insisted on the clause relative to Metz and Lorraine in the preliminaries of peace. This is the party which reproached the negotiator with not having kept Belfort, and which noisily advertised facts likely to make France odious, and did not shrink from the idea of a fresh war, having for its issue the complete and definitive ruin of that country.

From Bismarck's own account, the military party, swollen by the German victories, held Bismarck himself in check. The Chancellor gave it pledges, or perhaps feigned to give way to it, at the moment when, at Versailles, at Brussels, and at Compiègne, he was guiding the rigorous negotiation in which his masterful diplomacy delighted. In truth one would have said that he sometimes regretted not having got every possible advantage out of the situation, not having sold peace at a high enough price, and that he could not resist the temptation to go back repeatedly on a bargain, whose conditions, however, had been dictated by himself.

This sentiment appears already on the 6th of March in a despatch addressed from Rouen to M. Jules Favre. Four days have barely gone by, and he complains that the clauses of the con-

vention are not yet carried out by a Government which as yet has no resources at its disposal, no means of action!

Fresh German Demands

In this document, threatening in form, the Chancellor obtrudes a lively sentiment of mistrust with regard to France. According to his habitual procedure he enumerates his grievances and draws up an indictment: Paris has retained a garrison of more than 40,000 men; the French army has not operated its movement in retreat to the south of the Loire; France has not yet restored the German prisoners; the subvention destined for the support of the army of occupation has not yet been paid; he announces, in consequence, that he suspends the evacuation of the West. The tone of this letter indicates the character of deliberate harshness which will henceforth be that of the whole of this negotiation: "The suppression and punishment of these violations of the peace by threats of military violence is inevitable."

As soon as the Commune breaks out, the situation becomes envenomed. It was doubted at Berlin whether the Government of Versailles could make itself master of the situation. Count von Arnim declares on the 24th of March, "that his Government wishes to put an end to it at once." Simultaneously General von Fabrice tells M. Jules Favre that Germany is not far removed from fearing an understanding between Paris and Versailles to renew the war.

On the 21st of March, von Balan read to the French Minister a despatch from Prince Bismarck, in which France was informed of an intervention to repress the insurrection, but at the same time

the Government of M. Thiers was offered the material and moral support of Prussia to overcome it: a two-fold peril which M. Thiers felt to be menacing to him either way.

The Labours of the Conference at Brussels

The labours of the Conference at Brussels did not really open till the 28th of March, in a room of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The French plenipotentiaries had not received, it is declared, any official instructions. It is, however, probable that M. Thiers maintained personal communications with them, and that he traced the line of conduct for them to follow.

On the other hand, Count von Arnim had been present on the 14th and 15th of March at two Councils of Ministers, in which all the important stipulations of the final peace had been examined and determined.[1]

Fresh Proposals on the part of Germany

The Germans brought forward a programme at the outset of the Conferences postulating the following five conditions: 1st, the five milliards of the war-indemnity should be paid in coin; 2nd, that portion of the railways comprised in the ceded territories should be handed over to Germany without any other condition than an indemnity for the holders of bonds; 3rd, the commercial treaty of 1862 and all the other treaties abolished by the war should resume effect; 4th, an indemnity should be allotted to Germans expelled from France; 5th, lastly, a clause relative to respecting private property at sea should be introduced into the treaty of peace.

Each of these articles was an aggravation of the

[1] Valfrey, *Histoire du traité de Francfort*, p. 18.

clauses of the preliminary treaty. Five milliards *in coin:* the whole of Europe could not have faced such a displacement of money. To seize without indemnity railways constructed upon the territories ceded to Germany was to attack private property, for these lines did not belong to the State. To renew without discussion the commercial treaty of 1862 was to consecrate the economic subordination of France, and to take from her the means of facing her debt by organizing her system of tariffs and the defence of her commerce and her industries in accordance with the new necessities. To allot a special indemnity to Germans expelled from France was to open the door to endless claims of which Bismarck himself said that "it was impossible to estimate them."

The French plenipotentiaries, in virtue of their character, and because the discussion had been opened in a neutral country, that is to say with all guarantees for liberty of discussion, had as their simple duty to oppose a refusal to propositions so excessive, and, in truth, so incapable of being realized.

French Counter-proposals

Taking inspiration from the precedent of 1815 they proposed: 1st, to pay one milliard in specie, and the rest in bonds at 5 per cent.; 2nd, to fix the evacuation of French territory for the 1st of July, 1871; 3rd, as a counter-stroke to the proposition concerning private property at sea, they demanded the introduction into the treaty of a clause relating to the respect for private property on land; 4th, and lastly, with a just application of right and precedents, they demanded that Germany should take over the share of the national debt falling upon Alsace and the

annexed portion of Lorraine. By a singular mistake, the German negotiators relying upon a pretended omission of M. Thiers at Versailles, this important matter had not been considered in the preliminaries.

After having heard the French counter-proposals Von Balan declared that the scheme of the articles fixed by him ought not to open discussions of principle. Did they want to give the character of an ultimatum to the German proposals ?

On the 30th of March von Fabrice accentuated still more the comminatory attitude of the Berlin Cabinet by telegraphing to M. Jules Favre, that Prince Bismarck thought it indispensable to enter "into an examination of the position which might be caused for Germany by the eventualities of the actual crisis."

He declared also to the French plenipotentiaries that the prolongation of the negotiations at Brussels might be considered as an alteration of the preliminaries and a return to the state of war. Evidently the desire was to exercise pressure upon the French Government by all these means, and there was a hidden thought which was kept in reserve to be revealed at the opportune moment.

Repatriation of the Prisoners of War

To open the struggle with the Commune M. Thiers had been obliged to ask of Germany authority to raise the garrison of Paris, which had become the army of Versailles, from 40,000 to 80,000 men. M. Nétien, Mayor of Rouen, was charged with the negotiation. Bismarck, who thoroughly understood the interests which he had in seeing order re-established in France, consented, with a private reservation to get something in return for this concession at

Brussels.[1] In fact, as M. Albert Sorel remarks in his diplomatic history of the Franco-German war, "every advantage obtained for the benefit of social order was paid for by a retreat upon the field of diplomacy."

Twice M. Jules Favre went to Rouen to settle disputed points with General von Fabrice. In the anxiety which prevailed as to the intentions of Germany, the dread which was felt of seeing her intervene at Paris, M. Jules Favre went so far as to propose, on the 4th of April, to simply convert the preliminaries of peace into a definitive treaty.

On the other hand he was obliged to ask to raise the army of Versailles to 100,000, then to 150,000 men, by incorporating in it the prisoners, whose restoration he demanded insistently.

Bismarck consents to liberate our soldiers, but he presses the more heavily on the negotiations at Brussels. The Conference had been going on for a month without advancing a single step. The question of the definitive frontiers had not yet been touched, and it was the knot of the debate.

The Line of the Frontier

On the 3rd of April Count von Arnim opened the question. In the preliminaries of Versailles one single point had remained in suspense: it was the delimitation of the radius of action which was to be left to France around the fortress of Belfort. On both sides alike different projects of modification of the treaty on this subject had been conceived. The French Government knew that the Cabinet of Berlin would need its help to render endurable the economical situation which the annexation of Alsace-

[1] See speech of April 24th in the Reichstag; for reference see note on page 277.

Lorraine would create for those provinces themselves and for Germany. It hoped, then, by lending itself to concessions on this point to be able to obtain an extension of the radius of action round Belfort, so as to restore to France the territory comprised between Belfort and Mulhouse.

Germany, on her side, was feeling regret for not having secured to herself the districts rich in iron ore which stretched along the new frontier from the direction of Thionville, and which, moreover, assured the communications between France and the Grand-Duchy of Luxemburg.

The Question of Belfort and the Mining Districts near Thionville

This is the serious subject which was opened by Count von Arnim on the 3rd of April, and which occasioned one of the chief discussions between the plenipotentiaries of the two powers. The French Commissioners replied by a counter-proposition tending to modify the preliminaries of peace in the direction of the retrocession to France of the territory situated between Mulhouse and Belfort.

They were far from agreeing. The discussion threatened to go on for ever. The French plenipotentiaries debated foot by foot and with a force of argument which there was every reason for stifling, because it was equitable and sound.

The month of April passed away.

In order to press upon the negotiations, France was tortured with claims sometimes on the details of the occupation, sometimes on the requisitions. The Government was threatened with a German intervention against the Commune. M. Jules Favre was obliged to write on the 26th of April: "I receive your telegram; I can only explain it by a fixed intention of breaking off entirely."

Between the Commune and Germany the French Government, so weak was it, was held as though in a vice. Meanwhile Bismarck took note that the success of M. Thiers against the Commune was now only an affair of a few days. He wished then to conclude the peace without delay; in fact, when once order was completely re-established France would have more freedom of mind for debate. On the other hand, the service rendered to the general cause of order by M. Thiers might enlist the active sympathy of Europe in favour of his Government.

Lastly, rumours inconsiderately spread in the lobbies at Versailles as to the material impossibility of paying five milliards in the time appointed; the somewhat blustering pride affected by a certain number of deputies at the sight of the rapid re-constitution of the army; all this, transmitted to Bismarck by his agents, caused him to fear that France would soon be in a condition to debate the terms of peace with more tenacity.

Bismarck hastens the Conclusion

In the last days of April he decided to lean with all his weight upon the French Government, and to have recourse, if need be, to the extreme procedure of the ultimatum.

On the 2nd of May, in a despatch "more threatening than any of the others," says M. Jules Favre, the Chancellor expressed very serious apprehensions as to the good faith of France in the execution of the preliminaries of peace. On the 3rd of May General von Fabrice wrote to M. Thiers that "the French proposals at Brussels were contrary to the spirit as also to the letter of the preliminaries." Bismarck did not wish to remain in uncertainty any longer. It was necessary "to come to an understanding." If the negotiations did not come

to a satisfactory termination, "Germany would occupy Paris either on agreement with the Commune, or by force, and once in possession of this pledge would demand from the Government of Versailles, that in conformity with the stipulations of the preliminaries of peace, it should withdraw the troops behind the Loire." At the same time making use of an artifice, which had hitherto been infallible, Bismarck caused the rumour that he was negotiating with the Imperial family to be spread abroad.

M. Jules Favre was, as he wrote, "at the end of his patience, at the end of his strength." He betook himself to Soisy-sous-Étioles (Seine-et-Oise) whither von Fabrice had transported himself, and demanded an interview with Bismarck, if the latter consented to meet him half-way. M. Thiers himself wrote on the 4th of May to Baron von Fabrice: "I have no wish to decline the pledges that have been taken; but it is my duty not to let them be exaggerated. For this reason I have eagerly and confidently welcomed the idea of an interview between Prince Bismarck and MM. Jules Favre and Pouyer-Quertier."

Bismarck re-enters upon the Negotiations

Prince Bismarck was reaching his end. He thus snatched the negotiations from the procrastinations of Brussels. Re-entering upon the negotiations in person he undertook to bring matters to an abrupt conclusion. The proposal was accepted. A meeting was fixed for Saturday, the 6th of May, 1871, at Frankfort. The conferences at Brussels were broken off on the 4th of May.

M. Thiers joined to the Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Pouyer-Quertier, Minister of Finance; he gave

them full power to negotiate, reserving a reference to Versailles before concluding.

The two French Ministers left Versailles on the 4th of May. Recognized at the Pantin station at the moment when he was going to enter the train, M. Jules Favre was very nearly carried off by a band of insurrectionists.

The Frankfort interview

MM. Jules Favre and Pouyer-Quertier arrived at Frankfort in the afternoon of the 5th of May. Bismarck joined them in the course of the night.

On the French side, as M. Jules Favre declared to the National Assembly, the state of mind was such that they were ready to submit to all the Prussian demands. As for Bismarck he displayed but a meagre faith in the success of the interview.

The Chancellor had announced his visit for the following day; M. Jules Favre, thinking it right to be the first, went in the morning, accompanied by M. Pouyer-Quertier to the Swan Hotel, where a first interview took place. This preliminary conversation was very cool on both sides. M. Jules Favre explained that in proposing the meeting he had wished to eliminate the uncertainty which prevailed in respect of the relations between the two countries : he declared that France was ready to conclude the definitive peace.

Bismarck then repeated with a certain asperity the recriminations previously formulated. He complained bitterly of the failure to execute the preliminary clauses of February the 26th, protested against the long duration of the second siege of Paris, asking himself whether the French Government would have the necessary strength to deal with the insurrection. In any case, he considered

that everything was again at issue; he declared that the guarantees given to Germany were disappearing, and asserted that he had received an order from the Emperor to demand fresh ones, which would form the subject of an additional convention.

Resuming the terms of the last communication of General von Fabrice, he declared that, in case of refusal, Germany would demand of France the strict execution of the preliminaries of Versailles, and notably the retreat of the French army behind the Loire with the exception of 40,000 men. Furthermore, Germany intended to reserve her liberty of action for the suppression of the insurrection of Paris, as well as for the choice of a town where the further peace negotiations should be continued, Brussels having become henceforth impossible.

To this overpowering utterance, M. Jules Favre replied by protesting afresh the loyalty of France, repeating his offer to convert the preliminaries of Versailles into a definitive offer of peace, and alleging that the failure to execute certain clauses of this latter treaty was, for the moment, a case of stress of circumstances on the side of France.

Bismarck did not conceal that what he feared above all was to see the guarantees given to Germany vanish in all that concerned the payment of the contribution of war. He insisted again on receiving information on this subject, and added, "I think that if we come to an understanding on this point, we shall very quickly have arranged all the others."

M. Jules Favre having begged him to indicate his conditions, Bismarck demanded that "it should be stipulated that Germany should reserve to herself

the power of determining the moment when the French Government should appear to her sufficiently firmly established to render the evacuation of France by the German armies possible."

Ultimatum of Germany

Then handling the discussion at his own pleasure, and by an artifice in which he specially delighted, he suddenly assumed an air of severity and added: "I cannot conceal from you that I am the bearer of an ultimatum, which, thanks to the frankness of your explanations, I consider useless; however, I am unable to relieve myself of the obligation of presenting it to you." And he announced to M. Jules Favre that this formality would take place on the following day.

Accordingly on Sunday, the 7th of May, the Chancellor, in full uniform, accompanied by the whole of his suite, betook himself to the Hôtel de Russie, where the French negotiators were staying, and read, "in a grave and penetrating voice," says M. Jules Favre, the note which he had prepared, and which was nothing more than an epitome of the recriminations formulated the previous evening.

This proceeding accomplished, and its effect produced, the negotiations went on. They lasted three days. M. Thiers kept incessantly telegraphing to the two French ministers to finish at any cost. In this decisive debate were seen the points on which Bismarck really intended to be firm.

The Definitive Treaty of Peace

On the 10th of May at two o'clock in the afternoon the treaty was signed in a room of the Swan Hotel.

At this very moment M. Jules Favre received a telegram from Versailles announcing to him that Fort Issy had just been taken from the insurgents.

Various contentions with reference to secondary

questions were concluded at the same time; the last details were deferred to future conferences which were to be held at Strasburg.

The definitive peace was then signed, as Bismarck had wished, before the defeat of the Commune restored a fuller liberty of action to the French Government. Even up to this last phase France was subjected to the fatality which had weighed upon her since the opening of the war.[1]

The Treaty of Frankfort of the 10th of May, 1871, singularly aggravated the preliminary clauses of peace, and added others very painful for France.

New Clauses introduced by the Peace of Frankfort

The most serious alteration bore upon the occupation of the territory by the German armies. According to the terms of article 3 of the convention of Versailles the Departments of the Oise, Seine-et-Oise, Seine-et-Marne, the Seine, and the forts of Paris on the right bank were to be evacuated after the payment of the first half-milliard. On the contrary, by the terms of article 7 of the treaty of Frankfort, paragraph 5, the evacuation was deferred, either to the re-establishment of order in France, or to the payment of the third half-milliard.

While the Convention of Versailles did not specify the manner of payment of the indemnity of war, the Treaty of Frankfort, excluding notes of the Bank of France, demanded the payment in bullion, gold or silver, and gave a limiting statement of the values admitted by the German Government.

This demand, so contrary to all precedents, and so

[1] To know the German point of view in this last phase of the negotiations, and notably upon the important question of the radius of Belfort, read the speech delivered by Prince Bismarck in the sitting of the Reichstag of the 12th of May, 1871, vol. iii. p. 451.

excessive in the eyes of competent financiers, caused a suspicion that Germany hoped to retain, under this head, a means of bringing pressure to bear upon French policy.

Methods of Payment of the War Indemnity

The treaty thus fixed by its 7th article the manner of quittance for France of the war indemnity of five milliards: 500 millions were to be paid within the thirty days following the re-establishment of the authority of the Government of Versailles at Paris; one milliard within the course of the year 1871, and a half-milliard by the 1st of May, 1872. As for the three last milliards, they would be payable in conformity with the preliminaries of Versailles by the 2nd of March, 1874.

Military Stipulations

From the military point of view the Convention of Versailles did not limit the garrison of Paris and only compelled the French army to remain behind the Loire up to the signature of peace; the Treaty of Frankfort limited the garrison of Paris to 50,000 men and forced the French army to remain on the left bank of the Loire till the moment when the Germans should judge that order was re-established in France, or till the payment of 1,500 millions.

Contrary to the preliminaries of Versailles, the Treaty of Frankfort gave the troops in occupation the right of "raising requisitions inside the Departments occupied, and even outside," if the French Government did not punctually fulfil the obligations contracted by it for the maintenance of these troops.

The Commercial Relations between France and Germany

The question of the commercial relations between the two countries was decided in terms which Germany thought at first advantageous for herself, but in which the competence of M. Thiers and M. Pouyer-

Quertier could discern, even then, advantages for France.

Bismarck, like the German plenipotentiaries at Brussels, had insisted very energetically that the commercial treaty concluded between France and Germany in 1862, and which reaching its term only in 1877 had been abrogated by the act of war, should be extended by ten years, that is to say till 1887.

Upon very clear instructions from M. Thiers, who was desirous of returning to the protectionist system, M. Pouyer-Quertier had demanded that France should preserve her full liberty. The discussion was lively. Bismarck even declared that he "would rather begin the war of cannon balls again than expose himself to a war of tariffs." M. Pouyer-Quertier resisted foot by foot. At last it was agreed that Germany should abandon the prolongation of the treaty by ten years, and that the two powers should take for the basis of their commercial relations the system of reciprocal dealing upon the footing of the most favoured nation, limiting this rule to England, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, and Russia.

In spite of the powerful economical advance of Germany, this arrangement has not, up to now, dealt too serious a blow to French commerce. The *modus vivendi* adopted presents a certain advantage, as it has removed contention and evaded the friction which each fresh lapse of the treaty could not have failed to bring about between the two countries. But it is probable that a fuller liberty, secured on both sides, would have given commercial relations an activity which has been wanting since 1870.

Conditions relative to Inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine

Lastly, by the terms of article 9 of the treaty, and in conformity with an arrangement concluded on the 9th of April between M. Pouyer-Quertier and the delegates of Alsace-Lorraine, "France pledged herself to receive free of duty the products of the annexed countries up to September 1st, 1871." This was an amiable concession made to Germany, but also to the populations annexed. The honourable sentiment by which it was dictated did not, perhaps, permit the French negotiator to get all the advantage out of it which was open to him.

Article 12 specified that Germans having obtained authority to fix their domiciles in France were restored to all their rights and could establish their domicile afresh upon French soil. It added that the delay stipulated by the law to obtain naturalization would be considered as not being interrupted by the state of war, and that account would even be taken of the time that elapsed between their expulsion and their return to French territory as if they had never ceased to reside in France.

The Delimitation of the Frontiers

Concerning the grave question of the extent of the military radius round Belfort, Bismarck had caused a clause to be inserted in the treaty which left to France the option either of the radius originally fixed at seven kilomètres, or of a territorial extension which assured her nearly the whole administrative district of Belfort, but in this case, on condition that she should cede to Germany a slip of territory ten kilomètres in length on the frontier of Luxemburg. In this quarter an area of 10,000 hectares, with a population of 7,000 was concerned; near Belfort the new zone comprised 6,000 hectares and reckoned 27,000 inhabitants.

Looked at thus, the combination might appear advantageous to France; but in order to obtain the district round Belfort the plenipotentiaries were none the less by way of abandoning to Germany 7,000 inhabitants, who were authorized by the terms of the preliminaries to believe that they would remain French. On the other hand, all communication with Luxemburg was cut off, and, from the economical point of view, our rivals were left mining country around Longwy, of which the value was estimated at more than a milliard.

If they had been less hurried to conclude, more convinced of the possibility of resisting the demands of Prince Bismarck, more enlightened upon the mineral value of the territories demanded from them, the French plenipotentiaries would not perhaps have admitted so easily the principle of conceding to Germany advantages in Lorraine in exchange for an expanse of territory, which, by the terms of the treaty itself, was recognized as belonging to France except that its boundaries were not fixed.

But the French plenipotentiaries found themselves at once paralyzed and terrorized by the procedures of Bismarck. The excessive demands formulated at the time of the first conference at Brussels had facilitated the later acts of intimidation of the powerful negotiator. In the end there was amazement at his "moderation" at the moment when he was realizing his aims. M. Thiers, obliged to hold his ground everywhere at once, does not cease to demand peace, peace at any price. He was always afraid that some unforeseen accident might deprive him of the rewards of his labours.

At the very moment when he was victorious over the Commune, he was still apprehensive of a rupture

on the part of Prussia. Thus he hurled himself upon the new sacrifices which were imposed upon him, thus, on both sides, demands were formulated and accepted which kept hostile sentiments alive and irritated the wounds, which every effort should have been made to soothe and cure.

M. Jules Favre, always in terror and always in tears, added to the anxieties of M. Thiers. He wept and trembled when he ought to have remained calm and kept a stout heart.

M. Pouyer-Quertier did not allow himself to be intimidated by the artifices of Bismarck so much as M. Jules Favre, or paralyzed by the orders that came from Paris. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave him the opportunity, he opposed some resistance to the Chancellor.

Thus he preserved to France in the quarter of Belfort the valley of the Marcine, of which all the inhabitants speak French, and which assures, by Delle, the most direct communication between France and Switzerland. On the same day he had gained, as a personal favour, the retrocession of the commune of Villerupt, which includes very important mines of short iron. Previously Villerupt was included in the territories abandoned to Germany in exchange for her consent to extend the radius of the frontier around Belfort.

Bismarck had just said that he would make no more concessions. M. Pouyer-Quertier replied to him:

"If you were the conquered party, I give you my word that I would not have obliged you to become a Frenchman, and here you make me a German."

"How is that?" exclaimed the Chancellor. "And who is talking of taking your Normandy? I do not understand in the least."

"The thing is, however, very simple, Prince. I am one of the principal shareholders in the forges of Villerupt, and you see clearly that, in this quarter, you make me a German."

"Well, well," said Bismarck, "don't cry about it. I leave you Villerupt. But do not ask me for anything more, or I shall take it back again." [1]

Concerning the exchange of territory between the radius of Belfort and the district of Thionville, the French plenipotentiaries had been unwilling to accept the responsibility of coming to a conclusion, and it was stipulated by the treaty that the National Assembly, when it voted the ratifications, should have the power of rejecting this combination, and of contenting itself with a maximum radius of seven and a half kilomètres round Belfort.

As for the question of the share in the national debt bearing upon the annexed provinces, if we accept the narrative of these painful negotiations written by M. Jules Favre, it was not even discussed.[2]

Prince Bismarck only consented after long debate to grant an indemnity of 325 millions for the portion of the railways of the East included in the territories detached from France; this sum was to be struck off the second account of the war indemnity.

Ratification of the Peace of Frankfort

MM. Jules Favre and Pouyer-Quertier returned to Paris, and the definitive treaty of peace was deposited at the Bureau of the National Assembly on the 13th of May,

[1] Colonel Laussedat, *Délimitation de la frontière franco-allemande*, p. 51.

[2] Prince Bismarck, in the sitting of the Reichstag of the 25th of May, won great credit for the advantage obtained by him in reference to Alsace and Lorraine "brought into the Empire clear of all debt."—*Speeches*, vol. iii. p. 425.

1871. A Commission was immediately named, before which a lively discussion took place on the question of the exchange of frontiers round Belfort, and on the frontier of Luxemburg. M. Thiers, on being heard before the Commission, insisted with extreme vivacity on the acceptance of the ratification. According to him, a refusal to ratify might lead to war.

Debate before the Parliamentary Commission

A technical Commission had been constituted on the 15th of May by the Minister of War. Presided over by General de Chabaud-Latour, it included Generals Fournier and Chareton and the Colonel of Engineers, Laussedat, who had been a member of the French Commission of delimitation joined to the plenipotentiaries of Brussels. At a first meeting the Commission pronounced, unanimously and formally, for the rejection of the exchange, and for the retention of the frontier round Belfort.

M. Thiers on receiving information of this opinion flew into a violent passion, and tried to make the Technical Commission amend its decision. It then held a second meeting, in the course of which Generals de Chabaud-Latour and Fournier modified their opinions while General Chareton and Colonel Laussedat persevered in their opposition.

M. Thiers would not give way at any price. In his eyes the opening of fresh negotiations would have presented a real peril, seeing that the conclusion of the definitive peace had been so laborious.

Public Discussion

On the 18th of May the public discussion opened, on the motion of M. de Meaux, who declared himself favourable to the ratification, and to the acceptance of the exchange of territory proposed by Bismarck. The debate turned, chiefly, on this last point in the treaty.

Generals Chanzy and Chareton contested the opportuneness of the exchange. They calculated that the radius of seven kilomètres and a half around Belfort ensured the security of that place, and affirmed that from the military and industrial points of view the territories situated on the frontier of Luxemburg had a much greater value. On the contrary Admiral Fourichon and General Chabaud-Latour pronounced themselves for the exchange.

Intervention of M. Thiers

M. Thiers intervened in the debate, and pointed out that the position of Belfort, without the valley of the Savoureuse along with the canton of Giromagny, left an open breach for the invasion of France. On the contrary, the more extended radius round the fortress, so heroically defended by Colonel Denfert-Rochereau, multiplied its strategic importance by tenfold, and made it possible to join the line of defence of the (so-called) balloon of Alsace with that of the Juras. M. Thiers clung to his Belfort success, and defended it with energy.

So far as the territories on the borders of Luxemburg were concerned, he affirmed, from the industrial point of view, that France was sufficiently rich in iron mines to abandon those in the ceded district; from the military point of view, that these territories had no importance, the traditional line of invasion of the French armies having always been, at all epochs of history, that of the Sambre and Meuse.

"M. Thiers," says a very favourable witness, "once more imposes his will upon the Chamber. He treats those who are not of his opinion as ignoramuses, men who do not know history and geography. With his incomparable talent, that marvellous lucidity, which he brings to the exposition

of the most intricate questions, he opens a course of strategy for the benefit of the weak-minded of the Assembly. He does it so well that nobody has the courage to bring out a 'perhaps' or a '*non erat hic locus*.' We thought at one moment that he was going to favour us with the plan and programme of the next campaign against Prussia." [1]

In fact the strategical considerations developed by M. Thiers possessed a real value. If we wanted to keep Belfort, it was necessary to secure to the place the means of defending itself. By reason of the steady increase in the range of guns too many precautions could not be taken in this direction. But perhaps more tenacious plenipotentiaries armed with the concession relative to the economical situation of Alsace-Lorraine would have been able to obtain the necessary extension of territory at Belfort without modifying in so cruel and burdensome a fashion the clauses of the preliminaries in the quarter of Thionville.

Vote on the Peace

M. Thiers carried his point, and finally the Assembly voted the ratification of the Treaty of Peace by 433 to 98.

Bismarck had had the treaty ratified by the States of South Germany on the 15th of May. He informed M. Jules Favre of this situation and expressed his astonishment that the French ratifications were not yet ready. The Minister of Foreign Affairs replied that the ratifications would arrive in good time, and asked him for a new interview, which he judged necessary for an explanation on the general policy which the two countries were going to pursue in face of one another after the conclusion of peace.

[1] Martial Delpit, *Journal*, p. 157.

After some hesitation Bismarck accepted. MM. Jules Favre and Pouyer-Quertier arrived at Frankfort on Sunday the 20th of May, bearing the ratifications. They obtained more concessions on the delimitation of the frontier round Belfort and the manner of payment of the war indemnity.

Bismarck consented to receive one hundred and twenty-five millions in notes of the Bank of France, but he made some difficulty in acceding to the desire expressed by M. Jules Favre to hasten fresh repatriations of French prisoners, though article 6 of the preliminaries of Versailles stipulated that these prisoners should be sent back immediately and in their full number directly after the ratification of the said preliminaries. He insisted once again that the French Government should accept the intervention of Prussia in its conflict with Paris.

Exchange of Ratifications

At last the ratifications were exchanged on the 21st of May, 1871, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

A fresh conference took place in the evening at nine o'clock, in the course of which M. Jules Favre communicated to Bismarck a telegram from M. Thiers announcing the entrance of the Versailles troops into Paris.

Entering then upon the general policy, Bismarck declared that the Governments of Versailles and Berlin "ought no longer to think of anything but the means of bringing together two nations who have a powerful interest in living on good terms." M. Jules Favre having announced that he was ready to resume diplomatic relations, the Chancellor admitted that there was nothing better to do for the moment, and announced that he had chosen an Ambassador with friendly inclinations. He added that

the Ambassador whom M. Thiers should send to Berlin would be surrounded with marks of consideration. At the conclusion he explained the reasons which had determined him to extend the frontiers of Germany. He wished, he said, "to protect himself from fresh aggressions on the part of France."

The Chancellor and the Minister parted.

"Bismarck was beaming," writes M. Jules Favre. In fact he had signed with his own hand and on German territory the treaty which consecrated the greatness of restored Germany. This act marked the culminating point of his career. But already the evident allusion, which the Russian Government inserted in a contemporary document, could be applied to him: "It was also one of those monuments of a human weakness which does not know how to stop in success, and which, perpetuating in peace the passions of war, deposits fresh germs of hostility even in the treaties destined to bring it to an end."

II

It is necessary to follow the history of the Franco-German relations in order to penetrate the secret of all the preoccupations which agitated and determined the Government of M. Thiers. The cup of bitterness was filling, and emptied itself drop by drop.

Franco-German relations after the Peace

M. Thiers and M. Jules Favre had submitted to all the wishes of Prince Bismarck. The peace was signed; peace, however, was not yet made. The attitude of demand remained continual; no relaxation; menace and mistrust were upon all faces and in all hearts.

The Commune was beaten. M. Thiers had got over the first obstacles, the most difficult; the fall

of the Empire had been proclaimed; the authority and good faith of the Government were evident. Meanwhile, in Berlin, men affected to believe that everything was still in suspense, and that they had the right to take into consideration, and perhaps to encourage, the diverse revolutionary eventualities which might come to pass.

They wished to believe that this peace, definitive, ratified, doubly-sealed, was precarious; the presence of the army of occupation in France prolonged and aggravated a situation which was painful and full of danger.

No analogous fact has perhaps ever occurred. To reopen the wound every day, to insist on the triumph, make the point felt, not to leave its habitual course to that terrible Divine judgment, victory, to refuse even to listen to explanations! Often M. Thiers at the end of his arguments might have repeated the phrase of the ancient hero: "Strike, but hear me." In sober truth, if such a policy has not its origin in difficulties in the internal organization in Germany of extreme gravity, it is headstrong and inexcusable. Besides, after thirty-two years, it is judged by its consequences.

Answers made to France

Prince Bismarck incessantly repeated that France would not pay the war indemnity and that he wished to be sure of his guarantee. Would it not have been wiser to understand that France, on the contrary, as the facts have shown, wanted to pay, and be quit of the debt which she had contracted as soon as possible.

Bismarck affirmed that the war would soon break out again, and that he was only taking his precautions to be ready in view of the resumption of hostilities. Would he not have shown proof of a deeper

perspicacity if he had understood that France, after such an experience, would not stake her fate upon the fortunes of a battle, and that she would wait till the mistakes or the wisdom of Germany had modified what her victories or her errors had created. M. Thiers repeated again and again, and in a manner to convince any unprejudiced hearer: "For my part I want peace."

Bismarck's Mistake

Bismarck said, in the end, that his object was to isolate France and to keep her in such a condition of prostration that she could not find an alliance. Had he been more prescient, would he not have understood that France would recover none the less, that she would free herself from the heavy burden with which he had overwhelmed her, that she would restore her wealth, re-establish her army, and that then her alliance would be sufficiently valuable to make it imprudent to keep her outside all calculations, and to exclude her in anticipation from all combinations?

Opposite Views of General von Manteuffel

These reflections do not seem to have struck Prince Bismarck. They were not, however, even at this period, outside German consideration. The Commander-in-Chief of the forces in occupation in France, General von Manteuffel, had even then distinguished the advantages of a policy of conciliation. He wrote to M. Thiers, who had thanked him for his conciliatory attitude: "In my youth I studied the history of France; I know the French character. Then, after having made the acquaintance of your Excellency and of several members of your Ministry, I formed the conviction that this character is represented in the acting Government of France, and I made myself guarantee for the loyalty of France in

dealing with my own Government. I wrote that the payment of the first four half-milliards would be accelerated in such a manner that in a few months the figure of the German troops in France would be reduced to the number of 50,000 men stipulated in the terms of peace. In consequence I made the proposal to live under a new convention by executing literally those agreements made on the 11th and 16th of March at Ferrières and at Rouen with mutual loyalty and confidence. . . ." [1]

This policy was wiser and more able than that of the bulging eyes, the bristling moustache, and the perpetual play of ultimatums.

It is true that at Berlin even it was not always appreciated. But General von Manteuffel having once clearly conceived it, persevered in it with the spirited sincerity of a nobleman and a soldier. He wrote again on the 19th of August, 1871, in connexion with an incident in the press: ". . . the situation is too tense to aggravate it further by personal susceptibilities. I beg your Excellency to be convinced that, considering the circumstances, I shall be, as far as possible, more conciliatory than ever in all that concerns the army of occupation. I ascribe no merit to myself in this; it is at the same time *the interest of my country* which dictates this conduct to me." [2]

The Conference of Frankfort

In the period which immediately follows upon the conclusion of the peace of Frankfort the negotiations are continued upon three points at once: at Frankfort, where a series of additional agreements are elaborated with

[1] Doniol, *Monsieur Thiers, le Comte de Saint-Vallier et le Général de Manteuffel*, p. 32.

[2] Documents émanant de M. Thiers. *Occupation et Libération*, t. i. p. 60.

a view to regulating the details of the execution of the treaty of peace. The conferences began on the 6th of July, 1871, and did not end till the 6th of December following. Filled with dissensions of a very intricate nature, sometimes very sharp, always very painful, these conferences ended in an additional agreement dated the 11th of December, 1871. This arranged for the annexed territories the following points one after another: option of nationality for the inhabitants; civil and ecclesiastical pensions; military powers; exchange of convicts and lunatics; rights of mortgagees; deeds, plans, registers, and records of communes; the authority of bishops in the portions of their dioceses situated on one side or the other of the new frontier until the limits of these dioceses had been brought into line with the political boundary; the rights resulting from patents; landed estates and forests on the borders; concessions of roads, canals, mines, and railways; the control of canals and water-courses. The agreement further stipulated the resumption of the treaties and agreements existing between France and the German States before the war. It also granted, within a radius of ten kilomètres on each side of the frontier, immunity from customs and tolls upon the agricultural and forest produce of that zone.[1]

The Delimitation of the Frontier

Other conferences on the new frontier; it was necessary to proceed to the delimitation. A mixed commission was charged with these topographical labours, which were not to finish before the end of the year 1871.

This was a new and cruel trial for the populations

[1] *Recueil des Traités, Conventions, etc.*, t. i. p. 89.

of the frontier. The Germans disputed the soil foot by foot.[1]

They displayed their grasping tendency especially around Mount Donon, whose summit dominates the plain of Alsace. At this point the frontier had not been very clearly defined by the agreement appended to the treaty of peace. Thus the Germans put forward the claim to annex the two villages of Raon-lès-Leau and Raon-sur-Plaine. In the end they abandoned their claims upon the two villages to retain only the surrounding territories, which left them masters of the strategic position and of the Donon table-land.

In this way an improbable frontier-line was arrived at, failing to satisfy any of the conditions necessary for the frontiers of great states. Crossing the territory of the two communes on a surface of about 600 hectares (1,122 acres) the line amounts to the length of eighteen kilomètres (about 11¼ miles) and needs no less than 152 boundary stones. Between the points where the zigzags begin and where they finish the distance in a bee line is not even three kilomètres (about one mile and seven furlongs). There was there a source of still graver conflicts, which, for the rest, did not fail to take place in the sequel.

Grief of the parted Population

The population watched the staking out of the new frontier with grief. Scarcely were the poles and pegs planted and the members of the Commission out of sight when the whole was pulled up. Later on even the boundary stones were removed.

The French Commissioners witnessed numerous scenes of despair and stirring patriotic emotion.

[1] Colonel Laussedat, *La délimitation de la frontière franco-allemande*, pp. 85 *et sqq.*

Colonel Laussedat, who presided over this operation, gives the following illustration, which clearly marks the condition of mind of the populations torn from their fatherland by the law of conquest.

"It was," says he, "on the boundary of the two communes of Beuvillers and Boulange. We had all arrived at the first boundary mark except the Mayor of Boulange. The German Commissioner, M. Hauchecorne, who had summoned him, was getting impatient, and seeing him coming in the distance at a walking pace, and swinging himself about:

"'Come, Mr. Mayor, hurry up, you are late, and we are waiting for you,' he shouted to him.

"But the Mayor of Boulange, a miller by trade if I recollect rightly," says M. Laussedat, "and with a breadth of shoulder which I could not help admiring, seemed to slacken his pace still more, which made the German Commissioner furious and caused him to perpetrate the mistake of taking the authoritative tone which, by the way, was common enough with him.

"The miller did not put himself out the least in the world, in appearance at least, slackened his pace still more rather than hastened it, and when he came quite close to M. Hauchecorne:

"'Ah—there now!' said he calmly, but looking him full in the face, 'do you think then that I am in such a hurry to become a Prussian?'"

The two Embassies at Paris and Berlin

At Berlin and Paris the normal diplomatic relations were resumed. However, the two Governments had thought that it was best to appoint at first simple *chargés-d'affaires*, whose more modest and less prominent character suited the transitory nature of the still existing period. Germany had accredited to the French Government on the 27th of June, 1871,

Count von Waldersee, a superior official of high merit, and one whose courtesy smoothed the first relations, so far as circumstances permitted.

At the same time M. Thiers had appointed an experienced agent to represent France at Berlin, the Marquis de Gabriac, who gladly left the situation of First Secretary at St. Petersburg. He was a man of wisdom and judgment; he professed the maxim "that a warlike diplomatist is worth as little as a soldier who refuses to fight." His part consisted at first in looking and listening. He knew how to fill it with tact and shrewdness. We owe him the story of an interview of the 13th of August, 1871, in which Prince Bismarck reveals himself even through the somewhat heavy clouds in which he is wrapped:

Conversation between Bismarck and the French Chargé-d'affaires

"To tell you my thoughts frankly," said the Chancellor, "I do not believe that you want at the present moment to break the existing truce. You will pay us two milliards. But when we are in 1874 and it is necessary to pay the three others, you will make war upon us. Well, you understand that if you are to resume hostilities it is better for us, if not for you, that it should happen sooner rather than later. Wait ten years and begin again then, if such is your pleasure; up to then it would be suicidal for you, but that is your business. I do not deceive myself; it would not be consistent to have taken Metz from you, which is French, if imperious necessities did not compel us to keep it. As a question of principle, I should not have wished to keep this town for Germany. When the question was examined before the Emperor, the Head Quarter Staff asked me if I could guarantee that France would not take her revenge one day or the other. I replied that on the

contrary I was fully convinced of it, and that this war would probably not be the last between the two countries. Under those circumstances, I was told, Metz was a place behind which 100,000 men can be put. So we were obliged to keep it. I will say as much of Alsace and Lorraine. We should have committed a mistake in taking them from you if the peace was to be lasting, for these provinces will be a difficulty for us. . . ."

It seems to me that the *chargé-d'affaires*, while bowing, as was fit and proper, to the customary themes of the great statesman, put some neatness and frankness on his own side into the answer which he gave him:

"Your Excellency's words," he said, "seem to me to prove one thing; it is that we are more consistent than you. You have signed the peace, but your language is the language of war. We have signed the peace and we practise it in our policy. We keep our engagements; we even advance the term of payment of our debts. We only ask you for one thing, to hasten, as far as is possible, the evacuation of our territory. . . . We have nothing against you as Germans; the two nations are not predestined to mutual extermination. They are two strong races, of different aptitudes, but they ought to live side by side in good understanding united by the ties of a common civilization, if fatality had not thrown them upon one another. It is the duty of their Governments to calm them, and that is what we are doing. Rationally you cannot ask us for more. . . ."[1]

These words seemed to make some impression on Bismarck. M. de Gabriac thought it his duty

[1] Marquis de Gabriac, *Souvenirs diplomatiques de Russie et d'Allemagne*, p. 141.

then, according to his instructions, to speak of the eventuality of a more rapid evacuation; he adds immediately in the account which he has written of this conversation:

"Bismarck seemed a little shaken in his ideas, and said to me with a slight hesitation: 'There is perhaps some truth in what you say; but it would be necessary that we should have confidence in your intentions, and *not being able to have it*, we prefer to keep the pledge which we hold in our hands as long as possible.'"

We know through Baron von Manteuffel why Bismarck *could not feel confidence*. It was at this very moment that the military party was exercising very strong pressure upon the Emperor William, and Bismarck himself feared that he might be reproached with weakness.

Intervention of General von Manteuffel

The incident which had caused the conversation, of which M. de Gabriac has given an account, had in fact to do with the attitude taken by the General in command of the German troops in France. We have seen that this General was not entirely limited by his military position, and that he had made a point of maintaining courteous and even confident relations with the French Government. It was furthermore a necessity of the situation; the presence of the German troops in France raising every moment incidents which required prompt solutions, affecting communications, provisions, allowances, the relations between the soldiers and the inhabitants. Thus the French Government had accredited to General von Manteuffel a diplomatist, in the character of Commissioner Extraordinary, the Comte de Saint-Vallier, formerly Minister of France at Stuttgard.

M. de Saint-Vallier, shrewd, zealous, impressionable, used to the German Courts, knew how to gain the entire confidence of Baron von Manteuffel, and by the intelligence of these two men working with good intentions much mischief was avoided, a little good was accomplished.[1]

General von Manteuffel had held high commands in the Prussian army. He enjoyed the King's confidence. He had at one moment appeared to be on the way to becoming a minister. He it was who had been sent to St. Petersburg the day after Sadowa to prepare the understanding, by which Prussia, already foreseeing the war with France, had assured herself of the friendship of Russia. During the war he had commanded the army of the north and afterwards the army of the east. He had operated against Faidherbe and Bourbaki.

His was an ardent, active, generous mind, a little bit " alt deutsch " in the eyes of Prince Bismarck, but a man with the courage of his opinions, his ideas, and his sentiments. He held M. Thiers in high esteem, concerned himself with the future and the judgment of history. In the very difficult

[1] Extract from a letter from M. Thiers to General von Manteuffel: " July 10 . . . I have sought and found two persons very suitable for the confidential mission of which you have spoken to me. One is M. de Saint-Vallier, a clever man of safe character, and speaking your language like a German ; the other is M. Blondeau, a former chief commissary in the army, . . . deeply experienced in all military matters, he is a man of eminent intelligence ! " M. Thiers added wittily in his letter of the 13th of July : " When some new incident crops up (Heaven grant that it may not !), or some cloud, thick or light, address yourself to me by the agency of my two envoys, the one helping the other to speak German, and I am sure that we shall soon understand one another very well."

functions which he held, he set himself to appease, to heal, while it would have been so easy for him to embitter and envenom. This is the part to which his natural disposition inclined him; it is the part which they allowed him to take at Berlin, not without sometimes making him feel the curb, when they believed or wanted to believe that his kindly intentions carried him too far.

Let us say, to speak frankly, that it is very difficult to discern the exact measure in which agreement existed between exalted German personages. It is to be believed that Bismarck knew how to use even the conciliatory tendencies of the General. Meanwhile the conversation which took place between Bismarck and M. de Gabriac seems to confirm the impression left by a letter of M. de Saint-Vallier. He writes on the 12th of December, 1871: "Things have come to such a pass that the chief of the Staff, Colonel von der Burg, showed me yesterday a private letter, which he has received from a high functionary in the Prussian Ministry of War telling him that the Chancellor is attentively on the look out for the first occasion on which M. de Manteuffel should make us a concession contrary to the intentions of his Government, in order to snatch the consent of the Emperor William to immediately replacing the General in Chief by one of the heads of the Prussian army most notoriously hostile to France. . . ."

Difficulties and apprehensions of the French Government

In the midst of these complications and uncertainties the French Government had to apply itself to the regulation of so many difficulties of every kind, inevitable consequences of the war and the occupation, and which in their daily continuity produced an

effect of nervous disquietude upon public opinion, upon the press, and upon its own members.

In order to disturb the peace of mind of the French statesmen, Bismarck had ended with suggesting to them that Prussia wished for a new rupture, that she was only waiting for an opportunity, and on the other hand he had supplied himself with suggestions that the war of revenge was always on the point of breaking out, and that it was necessary to be ready for every event.

This mental condition of the rulers spread further and further among the ruled. France suffered from the sensation of being treated without consideration, needlessly humiliated. The continuous concessions so wisely made by those who represented her, astonished her. Instead of the expected relaxation a dull irritation was everywhere felt, which the most painful moments of the war had not known. The efforts made to restrain these sentiments, natural as they were, added to the ever-present danger of seeing them break out, and to the apprehensions that the German policy had been able to develop in the French Governmental circles.

To borrow an expression from M. Thiers, which was often repeated at the time, and even by General von Manteuffel, the presence of the German troops on French soil "produced the effect of a foreign body in a wound, an inflammatory effect of the most dangerous character which it would be wise to eliminate, wise for us, and wise for Germany."

Unpleasant incidents multiplied, and produced at times a state of extreme tension:

Incident of Le Raincy

On the 16th of June, 1871, the day of the solemn entry of the German troops

into Berlin, Bismarck telegraphed to M. Jules Favre that some French detachments had by inadvertence occupied some districts reserved for the Germans in the direction of Le Raincy and Romainville. He ended his despatch with this threat: "I have the honour to warn your Excellency that if the French soldiers do not immediately withdraw behind their lines, our troops will attack you this very day at midnight." It was a question of a misunderstanding of no importance, a drunken quarrel.

Dated from Berlin at half-past five in the evening this telegram was delivered to M. Jules Favre at eight o'clock. In all haste he caused the necessary measures to be taken, and by half-past eleven it was known at Berlin that the French detachments had withdrawn within their lines.

This incident had provoked the most lively sensations in the Government: "One single shot," said M. Thiers, "and there was our loan come to nothing."

Affair of Bertin and Tonnelet

Later on at Chelles a gardener named Bertin had killed a German soldier. In another locality in the outskirts of Paris a man named Tonnelet had killed two soldiers of the army of occupation. On being arrested, Tonnelet and Bertin were prosecuted and brought before a jury, who acquitted them. Lively irritation was roused in Germany. General von Manteuffel received an order to declare a state of siege in the Departments under occupation. A fresh crime having been committed in Marne, the murderers were arrested by the German authorities and shot on the 29th of November.

It is easy to understand how M. Thiers and his

ministers, tortured by the perpetual anxiety of such a situation, a prey to the terrors into which they were thrown alternately by the complications of events and the calculations of Bismarck, anxious about their responsibilities and the future of the country, came to embrace with veritable passion the policy of immediate liberation, of liberation at any price.

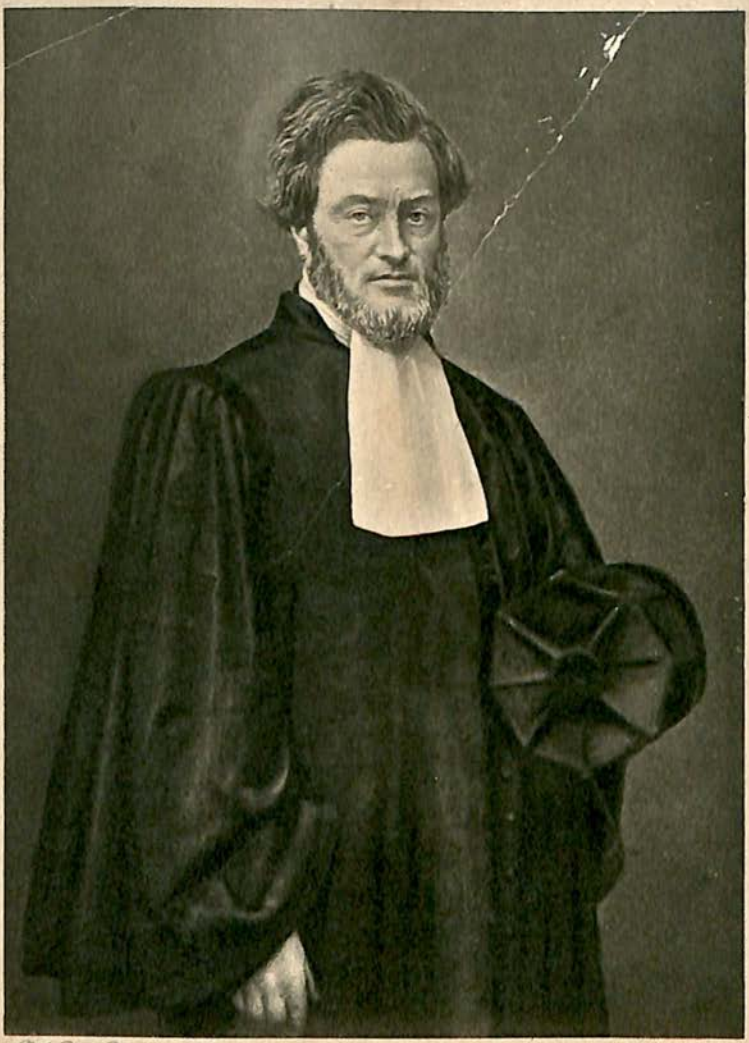
It has been possible in the sequel, reasoning in cold blood, to make objections more or less well founded to their policy. It has been possible to say that, by hurrying on the loans without waiting for the delays agreed upon, M. Thiers did not leave the credit of France time to settle again, and that he had caused a very heavy price to be paid for some months gained upon the postponement of the evacuation; it has been said that by hurrying the payment of the last three milliards he had abandoned on behalf of France the chance, that a European complication might have given him, of forcing a respectful attitude upon Germany; it has been said that by accepting successively and without debate at Versailles, at Frankfort, and in all the later negotiations, the conditions of Germany, he had not defended the interests of France with sufficient energy, and that his anxiety had added something to our defeat. It is possible. But in the position in which M. Thiers was placed any statesman in his place would have thought as he did: "First of all, the enemy out of France!"

Reasons for hurrying the Evacuation

There was a continued peril in prolonging the evacuation. Furthermore the Departments occupied were miserable. France without them was incomplete. The very security for the loans, that is to say, the taxes, was diminished, so

long as these vast portions of territory were not entered in the ordinary lists of the administration. No recruiting for the army, no labour, no industries; a state of vigilance which produced nothing but alarm. So long as the invasion lasted the war lasted. The provinces occupied were the richest, the most industrious, the most active. They could not even be defended; they could neither be protected nor fortified. So long as Germany was in France, France was hardly in full possession of the consciousness of her existence and her future.

Then, at any price, and cost what it might, the liberation of the territory; that was the work to which it was necessary to consecrate every atom of strength, every moment of time.



Phot. Pierre Petit.

Jules Favre

CHAPTER VI

TOWARDS THE LIBERATION

General Balance Sheet of the War—The two-milliard Loan—First Payments of the Indemnity—M. Pouyer-Quertier at Berlin—The Conventions of October 12, 1871—Beginning of the Evacuation of the German Troops—Debate and Vote on the New Taxes—The Elections to the General Councils, October 8, 1871—Bismarck's Policy: Reconciliation of Germany and Austro-Hungary—The Interviews at Itschl, Gastein, and Salzburg between the two Emperors of Austria and Germany

IT was not enough that blood had flowed, it was not enough that the territory was dismembered, and the family dispersed; it was now necessary that the old Germanic law should be applied in its rigour, and that the *wehrgeld* should be paid. Wealth represents the accumulation of human efforts; it was necessary that this rich France should be smitten in her savings, that is to say in her past, and that, by borrowing, she should pledge her future. The victor aspired to the perpetuation of his victory in the prostration of the vanquished.

The Payment of the Indemnity

So then the conflict which had shaken Europe was going to be ended in a business discussion. Those other manipulators of men, the kings of finance, entered on the stage.

Bismarck himself, in the course of the negotiations at Versailles, had brought them in. He had introduced to MM. Thiers and Favre, MM. Bleich

roeder and von Henckel: "Two of our prominent financiers," he had said, "have studied a combination by means of which this tribute, so heavy in appearance (it was then a question of six milliards), will be paid by you without your being aware of it. If their help is accepted by you, we shall already have solved a great question; the others will be solved without trouble." Great had been the surprise, and no less great the dissatisfaction of Bismarck, when the French plenipotentiaries thought it their duty to decline so obliging an offer.[1]

M. Thiers counted upon France, on the resources of a country which he knew better than anybody else. Let us add that he trusted with singular confidence in his own skill, his competence, his enlightenment. If he consulted the French financiers he astounded even them by the rapidity of his conceptions, and the soundness of his judgment.

A business man, yet more than a statesman, he knew the force of resistance of the French population; never was his headstrong optimism better founded, or of greater value to the country.

Among his grave financial preoccupations, *liberation*, urgent as it was, only stood in the second rank. Before everything it was necessary to face the

[1] Jules Favre, *Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*, t. iii. p. 76. Cf. a letter from M. de Saint Vallier of the 19th of August, 1871: "Manteuffel also spoke to me of overtures made at this time by German bankers for the payment of the three last milliards before the 1st of January, 1873, involving the complete evacuation of our country by the 1st of January, 1872 (*sic*); he has reason to believe that there was a previous agreement between the Chancellor and these bankers. But he does not know any more circumstantial details."—M. Thiers, *Occupation, etc.*, t. i. p. 55.

expenses incurred during the war, and the first operation was *liquidation*.

Liquidation of the Financial Situation caused by the War

Nobody could possibly know what the war had cost: the expenditure of the Empire, the expenditure of the National Defence, the expenditure of the Commune, here was an abyss into which one might in truth despair of ever being able to cast a light. For nearly a year over the whole extent of the territory millions of men had lived, had spent themselves, and had spent money for the public cause; during this time everybody had made requisitions, little or more, in the name of France, in the name of Prussia, in the name of the Commune. In the very thick of the crisis, on the 19th of December, 1870, M. Laurier telegraphed to Gambetta: "The financial condition is acquiring a degree of extraordinary gravity. I have seen M. de Roussy, the director-general of public accounts, in a state of absolute despair." And Gambetta telegraphed on the 23rd of December: "My mind is made up to anything; we will smash the bank if necessary, and issue State paper. . . ."

M. de Freycinet, educated as he was in the careful habits of the Administration, approved: "I receive this moment your despatches on the finances. Good. There is a fine Gambetta for us!" And Laurier, in his turn, on the same date: "Abundance must be created. Our salvation lies there. If the bank does not yield, we will go elsewhere. . . . I will get my plan for a milliard passed, which I will keep in readiness." [1]

[1] Here is the explanation of this phrase "plan for a milliard." In his deposition before the Committee of Inquiry on the Acts of the Fourth of September (Morgan loan, sitting of July 30, 1872),

It did not come to revolutionary measures. The bank had bowed before the supreme necessity called up by the Chiefs of the Defence. It had made the necessary advances. One had lived. But at the moment when the war was ending the Treasury was empty, and the immense past, with its confusion, blocked the roads of liquidation and credit.

First Inquiry

It was necessary to make a first ventilation and provide for the most pressing wants. M. Thiers employed himself on this. He was singularly aided in this task by his Financial Minister, M. Pouyer-Quertier, whose calmness, good temper, and practical commonsense were of perpetual assistance to him. However M. Pouyer-Quertier himself, "alternately confident of success and anxious without reason," felt at times a confusion and hesitation which he communicated to M. Thiers.[1] They were also aided by the powerful collaboration of the financial Administration, whose chiefs—and notably M. Dutilleul, director of the movement of the funds—consecrated a devotion, insufficiently recognized and anonymous, to preparing the elements of the vast inquiry on which the statesmen had to pronounce their opinions. One can do no more than epitomize these labours, which, if they were considered in their entirety, would be exhibited as a monument of financial science in the nineteenth century.

M. Laurier said: "Gambetta had an account drawn up for him of what the war cost per diem. That amounted to between eight and ten millions. Starting from that point he established the following calculation: I must be able to hold out at least three months. At ten millions a day that makes one milliard." —See *Report of M. Boreau-Laganadie to the National Assembly on the Morgan Loan*, p. 142 *et sqq.*

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs* de M. Thiers, p. 193.

Charges created by the War

The charges created by the war were analyzed as follows :—

I. Military expenses properly so-called, that is to say, sums paid for the maintenance, armaments and needs of the French armies ; sums paid to Germany for the indemnity of war, for the maintenance of her troops, as well as the sums representing the expenses which these live sources of expenditure occasioned ;

II. The costs of loans and the premiums allowed to the holders of vouchers issued for the same ;

III. The expenses of public works and others undertaken for the repair of damage and destruction of all kinds and for various kinds of compensation ;

IV. The sums paid to the Departments, the Communes and private persons, victims of damage arising from acts of war ;

V. Losses undergone by the State over and above sums paid by the Treasury ;

VI. Damages suffered by the Communes and private persons and not made good by the State.

A recapitulation supplies the following figures :[1]

Nature of the Charges.	Amount in Francs.
Indemnity to the Germans	5,000,000,000
Interest on this sum	301,145,078·44
Cost of loans	275,564,203·56
Deficit on the years 1870 and 1871	2,762,109,591·81
Expenses of War, paid by budgets posterior to 1871	103,254,600·37
Expenses of the invasion, ditto	49,471,394·71

[1] These figures are borrowed from the work of M. Amagat, *La Gestion conservatrice et la Gestion républicaine*, p. 776. For verification it is useful to read the work of M. Mathieu Bodet, former Minister of Finance : *Les Finances françaises de* 1870 *à* 1878, t. ii. p. 328, and the publication of M. Léon Say : *Les Finances françaises*, t. i. p. 363.

NATURE OF THE CHARGES.	AMOUNT IN FRANCS.
Deficit on years 1872–73–74 in consequence of war	191,264,128·18
First liquidation account	829,341,479·27
Second ditto	1,104,161,086·01
Damages to Departments invaded, not in liquidation act	340,531,639
Canalisation of the East	89,500,000
Loss of former war-material	369,000,000
Premium on loans	1,678,167,031·46
Compensation to Eastern Railway Co.	100,000,000
Material loss of Alsace-Lorraine	1,659,750,000
Losses of the invaded Departments, unrepaired	400,000,000
Resources created by the Communes to meet the expenses of the war	107,413,281·34
	15,360,673,514·15[1]

To this total it is proper to add the damage caused by the insurrection of Paris, which includes: the indemnities allowed to the inhabitants, and those paid to the railway companies; the expense for rebuilding the house of M. Thiers and the public buildings burned or destroyed by the Commune, the Palais-Royal, the Library of the Louvre, the Pavillon de Marsan, the Vendôme column, the Palais de Justice, the Caisse des Depôts et Consignations, and the Palace of the Légion d'Honneur.

We must further add to this account the loss which is represented by the destruction of the Palais d'Orsay, the Tuileries, and the Hôtel de Ville; the costs of the restoration of documents of the Civil Service; the costs of getting up the processes against the insurgents and the deportation of the condemned; the sums seized from divers persons in account with the Treasury; the requisi-

[1] i.e. £614,426,940.

tions of the Commune on the Bank of France Without including in this the life pensions granted to the widows and children of victims of the insurrection we reach a total of 231,794,626 francs.

General Balance Sheet of the War Losses in Money

So then the general balance sheet of the war and the Commune is consolidated in a charge of 15,592,468,140 francs.

In this figure is included the restoration of the great roads of communication in the Eastern districts intercepted by the new frontier.

The laws of the 10th of August, 1872, and of the 24th of March, 1874, authorized for this purpose the canalization of the Moselle; the canalization of the Moselle from the Belgian frontier, and its fresh connexion with the canal from the Marne to the Rhine near Oussey; the junction of the Meuse to the Moselle and the Saone, and the improvement of the position of the canal from the Marne to the Rhine borrowed by the new system; the reunion of the canal from the Rhone to the Rhine with the Eastern canal; the new road from Longwy to Pont-à-Mousson.

Other great public works had also been undertaken in consequence of the war; notably to develop the net-work of railways and of navigable ways.

In the grand total of more than fifteen milliards and a half are not included the losses caused to agriculture, commerce and industries by the suspension of work. Under this heading too there is a considerable loss, but one impossible to estimate. The sum of fifteen and a half milliards only includes what may be called the liquid charges.

There is another account not less heavy than the preceding ones, and which it would be no less difficult to draw up with accuracy; it is that of the victims

of the war; and the loss of men suffered by France.

Loss in Men

The reports of the Army Medical Service have not been furnished for the years 1870 and 1871. It is then necessary to rely on certain estimates in detail. Thus at Wissembourg the number of the slain is estimated at 230 per 1,000 for the division Douai, that is to say at nearly a fourth. At Wœrth the losses were 210 per 1,000 or more than a fifth. At Metz, out of an effective force of less than 168,000 men, there had been lost before the capitulation 25 generals, 2,099 officers, and 40,339 men; a total of 42,463 deceased, that is to say, more than a quarter of the effective.

After Sedan, M. L. Créteur was obliged to destroy, by means of petroleum, the bodies of the slain soldiers, buried in 1,986 trenches, at a time when M. Michel, engineer, and M. Drouet were employing other means of disinfection for more than 879 tumuli and nearly 350 trenches containing more than 10,000 corpses.

On the whole, taking the whole duration of the war, and following a calculation which is certainly far below the reality, there must have been 139,000 killed and 143,000 wounded in the French armies. There are further estimated 339,421 men entered in the hospitals for various maladies.[1]

[1] On the German side in the monograph which he has devoted to the losses of the army in the French war, the Privy Councillor, Dr. Engel, Director of the Statistical Office at Berlin, after having indicated 913,967 men as the figure of the effective of the armies of the invasion, fixes the number of killed, wounded, or disappeared at 127,897 men, of whom 5,254 were officers and medical men. According to the same work the total of the killed alone would be 44,890 men, including officers and privates.

Other German statistics estimate the number of the killed

The difference between the census of 1866 and that of 1872 further gives sufficiently definite indications.

Over and above the loss of 1,597,228 inhabitants by the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, the population of France underwent a decrease of 491,915 inhabitants.[1]

Further, if we take into account the fact that from 1861 to 1866 the population of France had shown an annual increase, feeble enough, it is true, of 36 per 10,000, "one may suppose that if France had not had to undergo the disastrous events of 1870–1871, the population would have increased as in the preceding period of 1861–66 by 130,650 inhabitants per annum, and by 783,900 in six years.[2]

This deficiency in increase, joined to the absolute loss of 491,915 inhabitants, would seem then to authorize us in attributing to the war, over and above the loss of the population of Alsace-Lorraine, a deficit of 1,275,815 inhabitants.

The war having been spread exclusively over the national territory, the losses did not fall upon the army alone, but all the inhabitants were more or less affected by its privations and diseases.

While the excess of male over female deaths had only been 21,656 in 1869, it was 59,165 in 1870 and 113,456 in 1871, and the deaths occur at the age at which in normal conditions the mortality is low.

and wounded of the allied armies at from 175,000 to 180,000 men.

Neither of these figures includes the sick discharged to the hospitals in Germany.

[1] In 1866 38,192,064 inhabitants against 36,102,921 in 1872.

[2] *Statistique de la France* (2nd série), t. 21.

Instead of 34,816 deaths at the age of from 20 to 30 in 1867, there were 148,472 in 1871. Instead of 52,160 from 30 to 40 in 1869, there were 102,826 in 1871. In considering this question the *Statistique Officielle de la France* arrives at the conclusion that: "The mortality of the year 1871 surpasses in its enormity all that we know of the most painful periods in our history."

M. Levasseur, for his part, in his work upon the French population, remarks that the Franco-German war caused the returns of marriages to descend to the lowest figure that France has seen in the nineteenth century.

Such are the burdens, inadequately grouped and stated, which were inflicted on France by the war of 1871 and its fatal consequences. Such was the situation in the presence of which M. Thiers and his ministers found themselves.

Different Systems for the Payment of the Indemnity of War

Let us go back to the question of money. How did France face the enormous sum (13 milliards of francs—£520,000,000) which she was bound to pay in so short a space of time if she wished to free her territory quickly, and suppress the charge which weighed upon her from the mere fact of the occupation?

It would have been possible to admit the system of an immediate payment by a proportionate diminution of the national capital. It might appear just that the generation which had assumed the responsibility of the war, and which had not known how to gain the victory, should bear the expenses of the defeat. In other countries, and notably in England, expenses of this nature are as far as possible put to the charge of current taxation, the principle admitted being that each age

ought to carry the responsibility for its own actions.

The Public Subscription

Analogous sentiments came to light in France after the disasters of 1870–71. There was an idea of having recourse to a voluntary national subscription; it fell through.[1]

More efficacious systems were submitted to the National Assembly. MM. de Carayon-Latour, Philippoteaux, General Chanzy, demanded that the movable and immovable capital of all Frenchmen should be subjected to an extraordinary tax sufficient to meet the amount of the indemnity of five milliards. "They estimated the capital of France at a sum of 100 to 150 milliards; a sacrifice of $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 per cent. on the fortune of each individual would have been enough to ensure the complete liquidation of our burdens." Men shrank before the difficulties of collection, and before the consequences of an immediate and direct displacement of such considerable sums.

Other proposals inspired by the same spirit were set aside and, after some hesitation, the system of borrowing on perpetual annuities was arrived at, a system which encumbers the future, and conceals the burden by distributing it under a relatively endurable form, a system which, everything being taken into account, punishes the future more than the present, above all if it is not corrected by the organization of a quick and powerful system of redemption.

M. Thiers and his advisers, carried away by their preoccupations in favour of acting with security,

[1] The idea of the national subscription was born at Nancy. It was but little encouraged by the Government. It produced a sum total of 6,850,000 francs, which was paid into the Treasury. V. Leroy, *Nancy au jour le jour.*

with promptitude and with brilliancy, did not even think it their duty to consider other and intermediate plans which were proposed; whether a loan under the form of an issue of bonds repayable in ninety-nine years of the type of railway bonds, or a loan under the form of bonds with premiums and drawings repayable in thirty-two years. (Proposed by J. Brame.)

These combinations seem at once less burdensome and wiser. But would they have given results as complete and as prompt? Without the assistance of the great banking houses, and perhaps with their opposition, would these divers procedures have immediately assured the considerable sums which were wanted?

To obtain these sums, to accomplish the great displacements of money which were about to take place, it was thought "that the assistance of the capitalists of the whole of Europe was necessary." It was decided then to have recourse to the simplest form of loan, and the only one admitted in all places, the public loan with perpetual annuities.

The Loan with perpetual Annuities

Furthermore, the principle was already adopted. Already the Imperial Government had, by the law of the 12th of August, 1870, and by the decree of the 19th of August following, opened a loan with perpetual annuities with a view to facing the expenses of the war. This loan had produced a first sum of 804,500,000 francs; to meet interest a sum of 39,830,000 francs had been entered in the Great Book of the Public Debt.

Loans contracted for the War Expenses

The Government of National Defence, on the other hand, had contracted in England by the method of a subscription, partly

public, partly through the intermedium of the house of Morgan & Co., a loan of 250 million francs, out of which it had, however, collected only 200 million francs. This loan, negotiated in London by MM. Laurier and de Germiny, Delegate of the Council of Finance, had been very burdensome. Taking into account premiums, discounts, and various advantages accorded to the intermediaries and the subscribers, the annual charge on the loan amounted to about 8 per cent.

Relations with the Bank of France

For the other expenses of the war the Imperial Government, and the Government of National Defence had borrowed from the Bank of France, up to the amount of 895 million francs. The Government of M. Thiers in its turn lived, also, from hand to mouth, feeding the Treasury with loans made of the Bank, whose total (including the loans made by the two previous Governments) was to amount on the 31st of December, 1871, to the sum of one milliard four hundred and eighty-five millions of francs. The Bank lent at first at the rate of 3 per cent., a rate which, following upon the very judicious observations of M. Henri Germain, was reduced to 1 per cent.

The limit of what could be demanded of the great national credit establishment had been reached. It was necessary to liquidate this situation.

The Bank was authorized to extend its guaranteed issue from two milliards 400 millions to 2 milliards 800 millions. Meanwhile there was occasion to face fresh obligations.

Thus on every side M. Thiers was brought to the urgent necessity of a loan.

The Loan of two Milliards.

On the 6th of June, 1871, the Government deposited with the bureau of the Assembly a demand for the authorization of a loan of 2 milliards 500 millions which it soon reduced to a sum of 2 milliards. The Assembly resolved to allow all latitude to the Government in what concerned the methods of operating. M. Thiers himself put forward an account of the conditions in a speech which he made on the 20th of June, 1871. After a somewhat lively discussion the law was voted unanimously by 547 members.

By a decree of the Head of the Executive Power, dated the 23rd of June, it was decided that the stock should be issued at 82½ on the 27th of June following. "Everything had to be improvised. . . . The management of the movement of the money was hastily installed at the Louvre, and the offices to receive subscriptions at the Palais de l'Industrie. The financial offices went into camp. On the 26th we were ready, one way or another, and on the 27th, in the morning, the subscribers streamed to the wickets." [1]

The number of subscribers was 331,906. The capital subscribed rose to 4 milliards 897 millions; it was reduced to 2 milliards 225 millions. The annual interest to the charge of the budget was 134,908,730 francs, which represents 6·06 per cent. of the gross product of the loan.

The Government in choosing 5 per cents. reserved for the future the possibility of conversion. But the nominal capital—that is to say, that which would be due to the creditors, in the case in which

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs* de M. Thiers, p. 195.

the Government effected the repayment of the debt —was 2 milliards 698 million francs.

On the whole the loan was expensive. Everybody is agreed in thinking that the credit of France would have permitted her even then to obtain the necessary sums on more advantageous conditions, perhaps at the rate of 87 or 88. But, once again, the Government was unwilling, at any cost, to run the risk of a check.

Appreciation of this Loan

Needing every kind of help it consented to reward it liberally. The result of this first loan was welcomed with joy. It gave the country a sense of its credit, if not of its wealth. The declaration of M. Pouyer-Quertier announcing the result of the issue was greeted by the Assembly with cries of: "Vive la France!"

It was generally thought, according to M. Mathieu-Bodet, that "the subscription which reached nearly 5 milliards would produce a happy result for the credit and recuperation of France, which abundantly made up for the loss of capital, which the Treasury had been obliged to sacrifice."

Payment of the first Instalments of the Indemnity

The Government being thus at once assured of the sums necessary for the first instalments of the indemnity, it was necessary to proceed to another operation, not less important, and in any case more complicated, which consisted in transferring from the French safes into the German safes the sums which were to constitute the different payments. It was a most difficult operation. There were not wanting economists or financiers in France, abroad, yes, and even in Germany, who judged it impossible to pay such a debt at short notice. A Professor of Political Economy in the University of Berlin, Herr

Ad. Wagner, after having estimated the expenses of Germany in the war of 1870–71 at 1 milliard 500 millions, expresses himself as follows in reference to the figure of the war-indemnity fixed by the preliminaries of peace: "The contribution forced was by its enormous amount to exercise a pressure upon the finances and whole economy of France; it applied to that country the torture of a partial confiscation of the national resources."[1]

Conditions of the Payments

The severity of these arrangements was singularly increased by the conditions of payment, such as they had been stipulated by the Treaty of Frankfort.

Bismarck, annoyed perhaps because the burdensome mediation of the German bankers had not been welcomed, had demanded that the payments should all be completed in the principal commercial towns of Germany exclusively in bullion, gold or silver, in the bank notes of England, Prussia, Holland, Belgium (to the exclusion of notes of the Bank of France) in bills to order or in bills of exchange negotiable to bearer, at full cash value, accepted by German experts. An immense exchange operation had then to be accomplished, which was to complicate the very operation of payment in a singular fashion. It was agreed that all the sums should be centralized at Strasburg.

To give an idea of the merely material complication of the work, it is sufficient to say that more than 800,000 francs in coin could not be counted in a day. Further, the most minute demands had to be met in the examination of the values offered by the French Treasury.

[1] See Adolphe Wagner, *Das Reichsfinanzwesen*, Berlin, 1874.

M. Thiers explains himself, for the rest, in luminous terms, in the statement which he made to the National Assembly in September, 1871 :

Do you know where the difficulty of the operation lies ? It is in the transportation of these enormous sums out of Paris. If we wished to transport them in coin—we have at the Bank six or seven hundred millions of coin—we should produce, immediately, a terrible monetary crisis. We cannot transport them in the form of merchandise ; that does not depend upon us ; we are not merchants. We can only use the results of commerce, what are called drafts from one place upon another. Now these drafts represent what ? Actual commercial transactions. We sell to the Germans ; they sell to us ; we sell to the English ; they sell to us ; and the paper which is called a draft, and which serves to carry the values from one country into another, must be based upon a real and serious commercial transaction.

Do you think that we have sufficient commercial transactions with Germany to find twelve or fifteen hundred millions of drafts ? No ; we use credit, and not only the credit which is based upon the trade between France and Germany ; but we have been obliged to make use, for example, of the credit of France upon England and of England upon Germany. We find paper upon London, in order to find at London paper upon Berlin.

We see : the financial institutions of France would with difficulty have sufficed. It was necessary to widen the base of operations, and, in fact, to call in the assistance of the whole banking system of Europe. That is why an appeal was so liberally made to foreign capitalists. Further, there were established in the principal places of Europe, and especially in London, special agencies charged with " impressing," as has been said, all the commercial paper which could be brought into line with the account of the payments to be made to Germany.

For two years we went on with a kind of mobilisation of all the banking activity of Europe. The advantages granted under this heading to the

great European houses were considerable. But on the other hand they contributed largely to the success of the loans issued by the Government of M. Thiers; their help, ensured by substantial premiums, permitted us to meet with unexampled rapidity and security the rigorous engagements which the negotiators of the Peace of Frankfort had been obliged to take. We shall give at the time of the completion of the operation a complete table of the values of all kinds which were centralized in order to accomplish it. It is sufficient to mention, at the present moment, the incredible increase of activity and work which it imposed upon the Government among so many other cares with which it was then overwhelmed.

Regularity of the Payments

The payments were made with a regularity which at first surprised and soon disturbed the victors. The dates at which they fell due had been fixed in the following conditions by the definitive treaty of peace:

500 millions within the thirty days after the re-establishment of the authority of the French Government in the city of Paris; 1 milliard in the course of 1871, and half a milliard on the 1st of May, 1872; the three last milliards by 2nd of March, 1874. The interest on the three last milliards fixed at 5 per cent. was payable on the 3rd of March of each year. The cost of feeding the foreign troops was at the charge of France. On the other hand it was agreed that the occupation should be limited to six Departments of the East, when the two first milliards should have been paid, and that the German army would then be reduced to 50,000 men.

In the month of June, 1871, M. Thiers declared

himself ready to pay 500 millions. In fact, five payments amounting to this sum took place at Strasburg between the 1st of June and the 31st of July. Even in the details of these first payments the extremest severity was met with on the part of Germany. There was a long discussion on the formal methods of counting. The intervention of General von Manteuffel, and even of the Emperor William, was required several times in order that the evacuation should take place in accordance with the engagements.

Commencement of the Evacuation

However, from the 22nd of July onwards the German army begins the movement in retreat which was to free the national soil. The Departments of Normandy were the first evacuated.

By the end of September, 1871, 1 milliard 500 millions were paid, and twelve Departments only remained under occupation, out of which six were to be freed by the payment of the fourth half milliard, and six were to remain in the hands of Germany up to the final liquidation of the debt.

M. Thiers offered to pay part of the following instalment in advance, claiming in return the evacuation of the forts of Paris, of the Departments of the Seine, Seine-et-Marne, Seine-et-Oise, and Oise. M. Pouyer-Quertier even prepared on this subject at Compiègne in conjunction with General von Manteuffel an agreement submitted to ratification. (Early days of August, 1871.) But the wrath of Prince Bismarck broke up this wise combination. It was on this occasion that the Chancellor had on the 12th of August that conversation with M. de Gabriac so full of arrogant mistrust, which we have related below. General von Manteuffel was disavowed.

It was then necessary to wait for the good will of Berlin. Furthermore, the stock of bills of exchange was exhausted. A too considerable displacement of specie caused in October a monetary crisis which might have become formidable.[1]

Meanwhile Germany in her turn needed France. The temporary arrangement granting to the produce of Alsace-Lorraine free passage into French territory lapsed on the 21st of September. Southern Germany had a keen apprehension of the competition of Alsatian produce. She claimed a postponement which was equally solicited by Alsace-Lorraine.

M. Pouyer-Quertier at Berlin

M. Thiers, understanding that there might be some advantages to be drawn from this situation, decided to send to Berlin M. Pouyer-Quertier, Minister of Finance, whose competence and bluntness had been appreciated by Prince Bismarck. General von Manteuffel, informed of this design on the part of M. Thiers, bore no malice on account of the recent check to the convention of Compiègne.

On the contrary, he took the trouble himself to indicate to the French Negotiator the precautions to be taken in dealing with the Prince-Chancellor. M. de Saint-Vallier wrote from Compiègne on the 15th of August to M. Thiers: "General von Manteuffel has two pieces of advice of the highest im-

[1] See an article devoted to the monetary crisis of October, 1871, in the *Revue de France*, t. ii. p. 629. The causes of the crisis are enumerated and examined in succession in the following order: Payment of the war-indemnity; subscription to the loans; bad condition of the harvest of 1871; speculation; panic. The coin then existing in France was estimated at four milliards of francs. At the height of the crisis a catastrophe was feared. Everybody provided himself with a reserve of coin, and accumulated it piece by piece. Money disappeared.

portance to address to M. Pouyer-Quertier if Prince Bismarck arranges to meet him at Gastein : one is, to be very careful, in case he should be received by the King, not to say anything to His Majesty over and above the things of which he shall have already spoken to the Chancellor and upon which he is in agreement with him, to watch carefully so as not to give the latter material for a grievance of this nature, for he would not forgive him, and his influence over his sovereign is too solidly established to admit of any hope of obtaining from the King a concession which had been refused by the Minister. In the second place he must carefully avoid entering upon several questions or different negotiations : over and above the danger of supplying Prince Bismarck with a convenient bolt-hole, there would be a risk of causing a miscarriage of the business which it is essential to-day to bring to a satisfactory termination. . . . "

These counsels, which were given to M. Pouyer-Quertier through M. de Saint-Vallier, ended with this sentence, which practically expressed the wishes of Prince Bismarck : " You ought before everything to inspire confidence, and you will succeed in doing so by paying *quickly and much*."

At Berlin M. Pouyer-Quertier was able to profit by the indications with which he had been supplied and to take advantage of the favourable disposition displayed towards him by the Chancellor and the Court. His negotiations bore upon four principal points : the payment of the fourth milliard, having for its equivalent the evacuation of six French Departments ; the customs agreement relative to Alsace-Lorraine ; certain details of the delimitation of the new frontier relative to the two villages of

Raon, and the district of Igny and Avricourt; and lastly, the prices fixed for the maintenance of the German troops during the continuance of the occupation.

He himself gives with great clearness an explanation of the conditions which he obtained, after a short discussion with Bismarck and Delbrück, in a telegraphic despatch dated from Berlin and addressed to M. Thiers on the 13th of October, 1871:

M. Pouyer-Quertier's telegram.

All is signed, financial agreement, customs and territorial agreement.

This last is to be submitted to Parliament, and will not be able to be ratified till after the vote of that assembly. The financial agreement will be ratified immediately at Versailles; it gives us the immediate evacuation of six departments which is to be finished within a fortnight of the ratification. We give no voucher in guarantee; they are satisfied with the signature of M. Thiers and that of the Minister of Finance.

We pay eighty millions a fortnight, starting from the 15th of January. I think that this result is about to inspire a fresh confidence in business, and that the London Stock Exchange and discount are about to be reassured.

We have then no longer any need of the bankers' guarantees; we shall get them again for our payments in three months.

As to the customs agreement, it remains what it was before our departure with some slight amelioration; but we have been able to obtain little on this side. The agreement then will expire on December 31, on the conditions which you know.

It is clearly understood that if the Parliament does not accept the territorial and customs agreement, the six departments will be none the less evacuated. On the contrary, if the French Government failed to execute this agreement, the German Government would be able to re-occupy the evacuated territory. I have also dealt with the question of exchange, and have secured that the day of deposit is to be considered the day of payment, while observing certain measures of order and security agreed upon between us. The drafts belonging to the Bank of France will be integrally remitted to it; that is understood.

I have also come to terms with Germany for the maintenance

and victualling of the 150,000 men remaining. We shall pay 1 fr. 50 per man instead of 1 fr. 75, a saving of 12,500 francs per day. We shall pay 1 fr. 75 per horse instead of 2 fr. 25, a saving of 9,000 francs per day. Total daily economy, 21,500 francs.

Such are the best conditions that I have been able to obtain after many efforts. I remain convinced that the prolongation of the present negotiations, however extensive they have been, would never have produced results more favourable to France. So I thought the time had come to-day to sign definitively, and to hasten to return to you for the evacuation of the six departments.

The Emperor caused his compliments to be repeated to me to-day, assuring me that we shall find his Government ready to come to an understanding with eagerness upon all the questions which might crop up between the two countries. For reasons of discretion, he sent word to me, he did not demand a second visit from me; but he remains convinced that my visit to Berlin will leave traces favourable and useful to both countries, and I am charged to express all his confidence in the French Government. I am assured that on the orders of the King the business is being proceeded with of sending back the prisoners who are still in Germany on account of crimes committed since the end of the war.

The two agreements will alike bear the date of the 12th of October.

It was in the course of these negotiations that there occurred between the Iron Chancellor and our Minister of Finance those famous competitions with the knife, the fork, and the wine glass, which have become legendary.

"Although M. Pouyer-Quertier alone held full powers from the Government," relates M. de Gabriac, "at that time *chargé-d'affaires* at Berlin, in his *Souvenirs diplomatiques*, "he begged me none the less to be present at the signing of the Convention, at which there were alone present Prince Bismarck and Count von Arnim. In the evening we all dined with the Chancellor. In these two interviews I was

a witness of the unbroken harmony which reigned between them, and to which it is certain that the sympathetic character of our Minister of Finance was not alien. The two guests did one another mutual honour, and I was obliged to admit, that in the new passage of arms, repeated from the Homeric heroes, in which each of them sought to dominate over his adversary, Prince Bismarck and he miraculously preserved their *positions*.

"The struggle between them was continued the next day at Herr Bleichröder's house with equal success, and neither of the two antagonists had to confess himself beaten. I had the proof of it the same evening at the Opera, where M. Pouyer-Quertier entered with a *very firm* step the box in which we had invited him to come and hear the tenor Niemann, who was playing in the *Prophète*."[1]

Advantages of the Convention of the 12th of October 1871

The financial Convention of the 12th of October was really advantageous to France. The speedy evacuation of the six Departments of the Aisne, Aube, Côte-d'Or, Haute-Saône, Jura, and Doubs, largely compensated for the anticipation of the payment of the 650 millions remaining due upon the four half-milliards.

The army of occupation was reduced from 500,000 men, and 150,000 horses, to 150,000 men and 18,000 horses. The reduction of the price of the daily maintenance of man and horse also produced a sensible reduction.

The freedom from customs granted by France to the manufactured products of Alsace-Lorraine was continued to the 31st of December, 1871.

[1] Marquis de Gabriac, *Souvenirs diplomatiques*, p. 163.

From the first of January to the 30th of June, 1872, they would pay only one fourth of the duties. From the 1st of July to the 31st of December, 1872, half, in such a way as to end the favouring arrangement on the 1st of January, 1873.

Payment of the first two Milliards.

The payment of the first two milliards was effected by two compensations and sixteen deposits, which followed in order from the 1st of June, 1871, to the 6th of March, 1872, as follows:

PAYMENTS.	AMOUNT.
June, 1871, in three payments	125,000,000
July, 1871, in two payments	375,331,938·74
August, 1871	175,059,770·11
September and October, 1871	510,006,825·36
January, 1872, in two payments	161,123,519·58
February, 1872, in three payments	257,912,703·49
March, 1872, ditto	82,367,438·89
Total of Capital	1,686,802,196·17
To interest due on March 3 (16th payment)	150,058,171·26
Total of payments made by March, 1872, in capital and interest	1,836,860,367·43

The two compensations (value of the Eastern Railway, and taken in account of the balance owing by Germany to the city of Paris) amounted to 325 millions for the Eastern Railways, and 98,000 francs for the sum due to Paris, in all 325,098,000 francs. The operation then came to a sum total of 2,161,958,767·43 francs.[1]

There was a small advance upon the dates agreed

[1] *Report on the Payment of the War Indemnity and the Exchange Operations which have been its consequence*, presented to the National Assembly, August 5, 1874, by M. Léon Say.

upon, that of the payment of the last term of two milliards being fixed for the 1st of May, 1872.

On the other hand at this date the enemy no longer occupied any departments in France except the Marne, Haute-Marne, Ardennes, Vosges, Meurthe-et-Moselle, and the territory of Belfort.

II

It was not enough to have a clear insight into the enormous arrears left by a disastrous war: it was necessary to organize the budgets of the future. It was not enough to borrow, it was necessary to guarantee the loans; it was not enough to reorganize, it was necessary to face the new expenses which were going to be entered successively in the budgets.

Increase of Taxes

Thus by a logical and inevitable consecution, the extreme consequences of the acts of a year ago were arrived at: increased taxation.

To settle the exceptional expenses, a direct consequence of the war, M. Thiers proposed to open a "General liquidation account," which was only settled in the sequel. He has explained its system as follows: "This account had nothing in common with the former budget extraordinary of the Empire. I was going to carry to it only expenses, which, once made, would never be repeated, such as the repair of our fortresses; the re-establishment of our war material, lost, worn out, or superannuated; the support of the army of occupation, the indemnities to certain localities, which had suffered from the war, for example, Paris." [1]

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 190.

But to re-establish the ordinary routine it was necessary at the same time to bring the annual budgets before the Assembly duly balanced.

The last normal budget of the Empire, that of 1869, had reached, or nearly so, if all the accounts which really ought to be shown in it are included, a sum of nearly two milliards of francs—to be exact: 1 milliard 879 millions to expenses, 1 milliard 824 millions to receipts, with a deficit of 55 millions.[1]

Budget Deficits

The estimated budget of 1870 had been established on the basis of 1 milliard 834 millions to expenditure, and 1 milliard 799 millions to receipts, with a deficit of 35 millions. Lastly, the estimates for 1871 had been fixed by the law of the 27th of July, 1870, at the total sum of 1 milliard 852 millions.

Naturally all these figures had been thrown into confusion by events. According to a first estimate made by M. Thiers, the ordinary budget of 1870 showed a deficit of 649 millions; it was learned later, at the time of the final settlement, that the actual deficit was 858 millions. Including the extraordinary budget, the total deficit was 1,481,000,000.

As for the budget of 1871, M. Thiers showed a deficit of 987 millions, which, as a matter of fact, according to the law of July 23rd, 1885, providing a definitive settlement for the receipts and expenditure of 1871, was 1 milliard 90 millions.

These enormous arrears were met, partly with the sums arising from the loan of 700 millions determined on by the Empire, with those resulting

[1] See Amagat, *Les emprunts et les impôts de la rançon de* 1871, p. 12.

from the Morgan loan, with the sums borrowed from the Bank of France, with a portion of the sums resulting from the two loans issued by the Government of M. Thiers and called the 2 milliard and 3 milliard loans; partly, too, with the sums attached to the liquidation account.

It was however impossible to return to a normal situation, without first presenting to the National Assembly a rectifying budget for the year 1871, which was still running. This is what M. Pouyer-Quertier did on the 15th of April, 1871. Such was the point of departure of the great financial debates, which were soon about to introduce into the annual expenditure of France permanent evidence of the events of 1870–71.

To what figure was the additional charge going to rise which it was necessary to enter in the future budgets? M. Thiers on a first estimate, which for that matter was very inadequate, presented in the course of a statement of the financial position on the occasion of the law for the 2 milliard loan, fixed this increased charge at 556 millions per annum, analyzing it as follows:

Thirty millions to the charge of the interest not yet secured on the war-loan contracted under the Empire;

Fifteen millions for the charge of the loan issued at Tours (Morgan loan);

Ten millions which it was necessary to assign to military pensions formerly supplied by the army funds which had been taken to meet urgent needs;

Fifteen millions for the loan agreed to by the Bank of France;

Sixteen millions to be paid to the company of

the Eastern Railways under the heading of an annual indemnity for the portion of its system annexed by Prussia ;

One hundred and twenty millions for the interest on the two milliards ;

One hundred and fifty millions at least for the interest on the loan for the three last milliards.

And in these figures M. Thiers did not include the indemnity to be distributed among the Departments which had been invaded for losses suffered during the war ;

The maintenance of the German army of occupation, which cost more than a million per diem ;

The re-organization of the army with its material to be created, and the construction of new fortresses.

When it was come to drawing up accurate accounts, it was found that more than 750 millions of fresh annual receipts were needed to meet the charges of the war. This amounted to an annual supplementary impost of more than twenty francs to each inhabitant.

How were these resources to be found ?

Two Systems of Taxation

Two systems were before the nation : 1. To proceed to a general remodelling of our financial legislation. To make an appeal to fresh resources : to create a whole fiscal system, inspired by the extreme necessity in which we were : 2. Or to remain attached to the existing system. To increase the taxes which seemed to be able to bear an augmentation. To proceed by measures of detail and a minute revision of the whole former organization, making it supply the whole of the resources which were required.

M. Thiers and the Government pronounced for this last system. They would have been afraid to

commit themselves to experiments in so critical a situation.

After some hesitation, the Assembly followed them. It confined itself to completing the laws in operation, to taxing revenues or articles of consumption, which up to that time had escaped any contribution to the public burdens, to suppressing frauds with greater vigour; lastly to adding additional centimes to the existing figure of several direct or indirect taxes.

Continuance of the Existing System

This result was not reached without passionate debates, which occupied long sittings in the course of the years 1871, 1872, and 1873.

Is it not, after all, natural that at the moment of proceeding to a body of measures which were going to have so marked an effect upon the situation of the country in general and of each citizen in particular, the different interests should have defended themselves with energy? How can we be astonished that divergencies so natural should have given birth to polemics, to differences of opinion, which went so far as even to imperil the existence of the Government?

On a review of the sum-total of the debates, and the efficiency of the measures which were taken, what on the whole is revealed is a lively sentiment of admiration for the relative calmness, the resignation, the self-denial, with which the Assembly was able to impose, and the country to accept, the heavy burden, for which, after all, a Government that had disappeared was responsible.

M. Thiers, after having secured the adoption of respect for the fiscal system as a fixed principle, had no trouble in securing the acceptance of another to which he was equally attached.

At all times he had thought that agriculture is one of the unshakeable foundations of the prosperity of France; he had always been alarmed at the measures of a daring liberal economic policy, which had, under the Empire, opened the French market to the competition of foreign produce. In some famous protests he had fought against the policy of free trade and commercial treaties. Here, for that matter, are some words of wisdom on this subject: "I thought it a great imprudence to burden the land with fresh additional centimes. The land is a perpetual drudge; it pays for all the follies of localities and Governments. A tax upon salt, easy to collect, would, it is true, have been borne by the country people like the land-tax." [1]

He won acceptance for these ideas by declaring to begin with that he refused to increase the burden of direct taxation. Limiting still further the field in which he intended to move, he put no less on one side the idea of new taxes upon personal property, in the evident fear of alarming the financial market at the time when he needed its help.

Increase of indirect Taxation

Thus he was brought by the process of elimination to bring his principle effort to bear upon indirect contributions, on the customs, and in general upon taxes affecting articles of consumption.

In principle the National Assembly was in agreement with M. Thiers. It shared his protectionist tendencies. Thus little difficulty was experienced in establishing a first list of fresh taxes.

Following the proposals of the Government, the Assembly first voted a tax upon mortgages; a tenth

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs* de M. Thiers, p. 189.

was added to the rights of registration, and the costs of the stamp; duties were established on sugar, coffee, alcohol, paper, and prepaid postal charges; taxes were imposed on the circulation of travellers and merchandise on railways; additional charges were first laid upon matches, and later a monopoly of this commodity was established. Quittances and receipts of any kind for sums exceeding ten francs were submitted to a charge of ten centimes for the stamp; for the benefit of the mercantile service a duty upon the use of the flag and warehouses was created.

Considerable as were the new charges thus placed upon the tax-payers, they were far from being sufficient. Even in reckoning the first estimates of M. Thiers as accurate, it was necessary to create fresh resources for a sum of more than a hundred millions. New debates of a still more complicated character were entered upon in the course of the winter session.

These great debates in connexion with financial questions occupied especially the end of the session which begun at Bordeaux in February, 1871, had seen the conclusion of the Peace and the suppression of the Commune, and was ended at Versailles by the Rivet law.

Parliamentary Vacation, September, 1871

In September, 1871, the Government and the Assembly thought that the hour was propitious for a suspension of parliamentary labours. Further, it was necessary to apply the Departmental law recently voted (August 10th, 1871) and to proceed to the elections in the Cantons for the appointment of the General Councillors; the business in hand was to test the new organization, an enterprise no less important than that which was being accomplished at Versailles.

The social bond, in fact, is felt above all at the point where it touches the populace, that is to say, in the administration of the Departments, Cantons, and Communes. Under the Empire the prefect held the battalion of mayors in a firm fist, and through it the docile masses of the democracy. It was now necessary to organize the relations of the three forces confronted with one another by the new conditions; the administration of the prefect, the reorganized General Councils, the mayors elected by the Municipal Council or appointed by the Government. There was more free play, but the game was also more delicate.

It might be feared that the Departmental Assemblies, strengthened by more important attributes, might not find themselves in complete agreement with the central power, and that they might sometimes engage in a conflict with it; it might be feared that the different tendencies of certain provinces might be exaggerated in each of these bodies, bound by no mutual tie, and that the moral unity of the nation might suffer; lastly, it might be feared that the establishment in each of our Departments of a kind of little parliament might develop to an excess the taste for barren disputation, and the obstructive meddling of the parties in the normal march of public business.

How was the prefect, whose authority was weakened, going to form contact with an assembly named directly and freely by the vote of the populace? Such was the question which was going to demand solution in each of the eighty-six Departments.

Message closing the Session

In the message which he addressed to the Assembly at the time of closing the session, on the 13th of September, 1871,

M. Thiers recalled the work which had been accomplished; he does not hesitate to indicate the serious constitutional problems which are soon going to declare themselves, but above all he points out the importance of this first general appeal to universal suffrage for the elections of the Cantons :—

You have been assembled, he says, for nearly eight months, and these eight months have, as you know, been as full as years. To conclude the peace, pick up the reins of government which had been either scattered or broken, to transfer the whole administration from Bordeaux to Versailles, to guide the most terrible insurrection that there has ever been, to re-establish credit, to pay our ransom to the enemy, to watch over the incidents of the foreign occupation in order to prevent their sometimes disquieting consequences, to embark on a new constitution of the army to re-establish our commercial relations by negotiations with all our neighbours, to arrive at last at the liberation of our soil, which is advancing every day, and to endeavour to re-establish order in the sphere of thought after having done so in the sphere of action : that is what we have been doing together for nearly eight months ; and you know that if your share in this work has been very great, ours has been no less so.

He attacks the constitutional question :

Let us speak, gentlemen, with all frankness, and let us admit, what, for that matter, it is permissible to admit, that we are moved, deeply moved ! How should we not be ? The country is at the present moment concerned with the greatest interests imaginable : it is concerned with the organization of its present and future destiny ; it is concerned to know if it is to organize itself in accordance with the tradition of the past, a glorious tradition of a thousand years, or if, abandoning itself to the torrent which to-day hurries human societies towards an unknown future, it is to take on a new form in order to pursue its new destinies peaceably.

Is this country, the object of the passionate attention of the whole world, to be a republic or a monarchy ? Is it to adopt one or the other of these two forms of government which divide all peoples to-day ? What greater problem was ever placed before a nation in the terms in which it is now placed before us ?

And M. Thiers concluded:

Thus, gentlemen, you are going to separate for some weeks to watch over the Departmental reorganization of France, to take up its tradition, or to modify it, if need be, to place yourselves face to face with the country, in order to form your thoughts upon her thoughts, while the Government will employ the time which you will leave to it in preparing fresh work for you.

The National Assembly separated on the 18th of September, 1871. Immediately the campaign opened, in view of the approaching elections for the General Councils. It was a veritable mobilization of the persons who composed provincial political life; it was a vast selection to be made for the first time over the whole of the territory; each of the cantonal organizations, an embryo of public life, was going to have to declare itself and to appoint its chiefs.

The Cantonal Elections

The elections took place on the 8th of October. Out of 2,860 councillors to be elected about two-thirds belonged to the Republican faith, with a very marked conservative shade. In places where the Republicans did not triumph, the Orleanists were elected to the exclusion of the Legitimists. MM. Rouher, Dugué de la Fauconnerie, de Cassagnac, father and son, were elected. On the other hand, two former ministers of the Empire, MM. Forcade de la Roquette, and Jérôme David failed. Prince Jerome Napoleon was elected in Corsica, and some noise was made about this election.

Prince Napoleon

Furnished with a passport, the Prince betook himself to the island, and was the object of hostile manifestations during the vogage. He hoped to be named President of the General Council, but his election was annulled, the Prince not having been able to justify his registration on the list of taxpayers in this Department. He com-

municated to the papers the speech which he would have delivered, in which he demanded a plébiscite, which would have to settle the question between the Republic, Royalty, and Empire.

M. Thiers was not without anxiety at the manifestations to which occasion was given by the presence of Prince Napoleon in Corsica. He had given very energetic instructions to the prefect, M. Charles Ferry, and sent the fleet to anchor in the roads of Ajaccio. After his check the Prince hastened to return to Prangins by way of Italy. This was a first Bonapartist movement which was soon about to assume importance.

Speaking generally the manifestation in favour of Republican institutions was brilliant. M. Gambetta, who never missed an opportunity of proving that the Republican party was a party of order, addressed a letter to Dr. Cornil, a General Councillor of the Allier, which may be considered as a kind of guiding instruction for the Departmental Assemblies.

He insisted in the first place on the scope of the elections from the point of view of Republican institutions; then assuming the hypothesis that he had himself received a General Councillor's mandate, he added: "First of all, I would forbid myself severely any kind of interference with the domain of general politics. . . . Nominated as a Republican, I should not think it my duty to change the nature and the powers of the Council. More than ever should I endeavour to keep administration separate from politics. I should be careful not to confound attributes and to transform the General Councils into Legislative Assemblies on a small footing. . . . I should then not demand the dissolution of the Assembly at Versailles, nor the proclamation of the

Republic, nor any measure of general policy. . . . I should concentrate all my efforts within the domain of local administration and local interests. Let the example of work in these General Councils demonstrate your competence in the handling of public business, spread your ideas and your principles, and the country will well know how to call on you to put them in practice. . . ."

Thus, little by little, under the guidance of wise leaders to whom attention was paid, the Republic took life and shape, the new persons became accustomed to the duties and responsibilities of government.

On the 23rd of October the opening of the first session of the General Councils took place, which lasted till the end of November, but of 86 presidents there were 56 Conservatives, 18 Republicans, and 12 Radicals.

III

The holiday passed calmly away. The country was resuming consciousness of its existence and its strength after the cruel trials to which it had been submitting for a year. However the spectre of recent events was still everywhere present.

The Autumn of 1871

Paris was beginning to replace the pavements torn up for the construction of the barricades. Enclosures, which were thought to be provisional, were arranged around public buildings which had been burned or abandoned, at the Louvre, at the Tuileries, at the Cour des Comptes, at the Palace of the Legion of Honour, at the Hôtel de Ville. In places where private houses had been especially attacked in the Rue du Bac, Rue de Lille, Rue de Rivoli, at the Croix-Rouge the work

of clearing up was proceeded with slowly. The houses that had been burned were still black and tottering; the outside shutters beat upon the windows; in the night these badly lighted places were like dark holes.

The quarters inhabited by the populace, decimated, torn asunder by the always latent passions of insurrection and battle, preserved an appearance of savagery. Men spoke in subdued tones at the wine-shops and in public places; they thought they saw either Communards or spies everywhere. The prisons were full. At Versailles the tribunals went on with the work of suppression. The mass of the people, smitten or threatened, awaited anxiously a word of amnesty and oblivion. Even in the wards of the hospitals, where the sick and wounded of the two parties were assembled, mistrust reigned; dying men mutually denounced one another. The doctors had to interfere to shield the suffering and the dying.

In the houses many sets of rooms remained empty or were occupied by passing tenants, whose real names were not always known. The concierges practised a kind of inquisition that was sometimes formidable. In the streets frequent patrols made their rounds.

The outskirts of Paris were deserted. There were no longer trees in the Bois de Boulogne; there were no longer boats at Bougival. Meudon was a desert. Saint-Cloud, where all the furies had followed one another, was destroyed as if by an earthquake; ruins covered the whole hill; Mont Valérien erected its military outline above the top of the wasted slope and looked ominous in the evenings against the blood-red sunsets.

Paris recovers her Normal Physiognomy

Life was recovering in the centre, in the markets, on the Boulevards. In the summer the fruitsellers were seen to reappear in the streets, and it was a joy to the Parisians to taste the first cherries and the first peaches in the open air.

Industrial and commercial activity, suspended for a year, took a tremendous bound forward in consequence of the events themselves. The stocks of provisions being exhausted it was necessary to replace them quickly. Many difficult situations had been liquidated in the general disaster. From within and without orders flowed in. The provinces sent in without cessation corn and butcher's meat to Paris, whose power of consumption was developing. In all who had not been directly hit by the disasters one felt the reappearance of confidence, of the joy of existence, an instinctive need to repair losses and to fill up empty places. Under these ruins, which the shoots of the first plants were barely covering, the pulse of life was felt.

So then the autumn of this terrible year passed away among its last sorrows, and its first hopes. However, faith in the future had the upper hand and all the indications of a rapid re-birth grew stronger. They could not escape the attention of Prince Bismarck.

The rapid Recovery of France alarms Germany

Already in the month of April the Assembly had begun the study of a new army bill which was to reconstitute and increase the force of the country. It gave itself to this task with passion.

General sentiment was favourable to personal and compulsory service for every citizen. There was a wish to secure military instruction for the whole

people. A Grand Commission named by the Assembly immediately set to work. Its labours lasted not less than fourteen months. But the fertile discussions which took place in the Commission resounded outside.

The nature of these first facts, carefully picked up, sometimes exaggerated by agents and the German Military Attachés, was in any case disfigured by very lively press-polemics in Germany and France. On both sides there was an unchaining of hatreds "which made men fear a return to savagery." Bismarck was then attacked by a nervous malady which showed itself in an almost permanent state of irritation. It was related in jest at Berlin that he had sent word to his doctor "that he was too ill to see him."

Already on the occasion of the Review of the 14th of July Count von Waldersee had presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs observations tending to impute sinister intentions to the French Government.

At Frankfort the negotiations followed one another to settle questions of secondary importance, which the treaty of peace had left in suspense. The march of these labours was exceedingly slow. On the settlement of right of option for the inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine, the question of the reimbursement of the sums confiscated by the German armies in the branch establishments of the Bank of France, and lastly on the question of granting an amnesty to Frenchmen who had fought for their independence in the annexed countries, an understanding was not by way of being reached. The German negotiators met the insistence of the French negotiators with the reiterated statement that they were without instructions. Prince Bismarck himself was

soon to declare to M. de Gabriac that this deliberate attitude amounted to a plea in bar.[1]

We have already recalled the grave difficulty which was raised in August, 1871, by the tentative to establish direct negotiation with General von Manteuffel for the payment of one of the instalments of the indemnity in advance, and the simultaneous evacuation of other French Departments. Bismarck considered this procedure as forming a direct attack upon his authority. It was at that time that he had that lively conversation with M. de Gabriac, which we have also reported: "I have come," said he, "from the depths of Pomerania to re-establish my authority in relation to my colleagues."

Attitude of Bismarck

In reality he was not only nervous but alarmed. The *chargé-d'affaires* further explains the situation very concisely, when he says in a letter addressed to M. de Rémusat, Minister of Foreign Affairs: "Germany has nothing further to hope for from a new war. The one which is ending has given her three things which were wanting to her: national unity, military supremacy, the money of our milliards. So then she desires peace. . . . But if we were to give Bismarck any pretext, *however illegitimate*, he would seize it without any great regret, and he is strong enough to-day to draw the nation with him. . . . Bismarck at heart knows only one real sovereignty, that of the end to be gained. To-day he is our enemy because he has done us too much mischief not to wish to do us more. *Chi offende non perdona*. . . . He is merely logical in seeking the prostration of France for the duration of at least one generation." [2]

[1] Gabriac, *Souvenirs diplomatiques de Russie et d'Allemagne.*
[2] Gabriac, p. 155.

The mind of the powerful statesman, fertile in resources, was seeking at the same moment the consolidation of his work in political combinations of quite another scope from these diplomatic freaks.

His state of extreme nervousness and the isolation in which he enclosed himself at Varzin perhaps serve only to render the work to which he abandoned himself the more remarkable. Never had his diplomacy been more active or more fertile. He wished to round off his victories of Versailles and Frankfort, and he turned towards those "neutrals" who had caused him so much anxiety at the time when he was signing the peace with France.

He turns to the Neutrals

Indefatigable as ever, he engaged in a new diplomatic campaign, the one which was to end first in the meeting between the three Emperors, and later on in the Triple Alliance. He began by noting that he had missed his aim and had not been able to prostrate France finally; he saw her soon to become an ever present cause of anxiety for Germany. In the European combinations of the future she would hold out her hand to any power which should endeavour to escape from the German supremacy. Thus it was necessary to fortify himself in advance on the side of Europe.

He hesitated to reopen hostilities, to put the fortunes of Germany once again at stake, and once again to strain the passivity of Europe. It had proved impossible to crush France. It was necessary to isolate her.

Among the neutral Powers the one which had, on two occasions, most effectually given Bismarck cause for anxiety was Austria. This then is the quarter to which he first turned.

Austro-Hungarian Policy

Since 1866 the policy of Austria-Hungary seemed perplexed. It was directed at that time, under the authority of the Emperor Francis Joseph, by a kind of free-lance in diplomacy, a Southern German, Count von Beust, brilliant and vivacious, easily satisfied with himself and a little bit over-rated. "The man who, as M. Thiers has said, had least the air of believing what he said" wavered between two systems: either forming vague projects of resistance to the Prussian influence, a policy which Count von Beust described so as to offend nobody, as "a policy of the free hand," or adopting a foregone conclusion of resignation and submission to the accomplished fact, another system which Count Andrassy was in his turn to baptize: "the policy of the compulsory route."

Before the War

This double tendency had been very clearly marked out in the decisive interview which the Emperor Francis Joseph had had with General Lebrun, aide-de-camp of the Emperor Napoleon III some weeks before the declaration of war, at the time when the eventual intervention of Austria was, so to say, discounted by the Cabinet of Paris: "I flatter myself with the hope," he had said, "that the Emperor Napoleon will be so good as to take into account my personal and political situation, both at home and abroad. If I declared war simultaneously with him there is no doubt that Prussia, exploiting afresh the German ideal, would be able to stimulate and stir up to her own advantage the German populations, not only in her own territory and in South Germany, but also in the *Austro-Hungarian Empire*, which would be very awkward for my Government."[1]

[1] General Lebrun, *Souvenirs militaires.*

That amounted to saying that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was, at that time, that is to say before the war, already confronted by domestic complications or eventualities which in 1871 determined the direction which was definitely adopted.

The various nationalities which compose the Austrian Empire assuredly feel the historic sense of the necessity of their union ; but in the struggles for influence, which divide them at home, each of them looks for its ideal, and sometimes for its point of support outside. The ten million German Austrians, who have cherished in their hearts the dream of a great Germany have seen their dream partly realized, outside them, by the hand of Prussia. The Slavs admire the grandeur of the Russian world whose shadow spreads over Continents. As for the Hungarians, they are isolated in the middle of Austria and in the middle of Europe ; but they know that in the conflict of races they will weigh down the balance in favour of whichever of the two policies they lend themselves to.

Attitude of Hungary.

Prince Bismarck had at a very early date understood the importance of the Hungarians in the international game of Europe. He had caressed them from long ago ; he it is who, in a despatch dated from Frankfort, had launched the formula of the dualism. He had himself sketched out for Hungary a whole political programme, which he formulated afresh in these phrases from his *Souvenirs* : " If the consideration of a well-thought-out policy always had the last word in Hungary, this brave and independent people would understand that it is, after a fashion, merely an island in the midst of the vast sea of Slavonic populations, and that, considering its numerical inferiority, it can only guar-

antee its safety by leaning on the German element in Austria and Germany."[1] This theory is disputable; for it is evident that if the German element dominated the whole of Central Europe and stretched from the Rhine to the Balkans, the Hungarian nationality would be threatened in quite another way, and that the "islet" lost in the vast Germanic domination would be rapidly submerged.

But the supreme art in international relations is to furnish the interests, of which one proposes to make use, if not with reasons, at least with formulas.

Count Andrassy

Bismarck had known how thus to create for himself a point of support in this active and vigorous Hungarian people, and, notably, he had brought over to his views the man of the greatest influence at that time, the President of the Hungarian Ministry, Count Andrassy. This piece of work had gone on around Count von Beust, and, in some sort, above his head, without his perceiving it. The Presidency of the Council in Austria was at that time

[1] *Souvenirs* du Prince de Bismarck, t. ii. p. 277. M. Thiers relates in his *Notes and Reminiscences* a no less important conversation that he had with Prince Bismarck on this subject in October 1871. There was talk of the peace signed at Nikolsburg: "The King rejected it with indignation," are the words ascribed to Bismarck, "and called it an act of cowardice; he would have liked to destroy Austria. . . . I owe him an illness, he said further; one day when he had come to see me in my room, he put me in such a rage, that I got out of bed and went to shut myself up in my dressing-room, which I refused to leave till he had gone away. Ah! " added Bismarck, "monarchy makes one republican." It is evident then, writes M. Thiers, that Bismarck is speculating upon Hungary. She "will fill up the void between Prague and Constantinople." He would like to make of her a kind of intermediate empire after having taken for himself all the German races. He dreams of all that." *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 92.

in the hands of Count Hohenwarth, who rested on the support of the Slavs.

In consequence of this circumstance the Germans of Austria and the Hungarians had their special reasons for allowing themselves to fall in with the sentiments and natural tendencies which bore them towards the newly constituted German Empire, now the victor of Europe.

Bismarck says that at the opening of the French Campaign, being then at Meaux, he had thought of setting these springs to work "and that he had already sounded the Courts of Vienna and St. Petersburg with a view to an alliance of the three Emperors, with a secret thought that the Italian Monarchy would come to join it."

First tentatives of an Approach to the Austro-Hungarian Empire

On the 14th of December, 1870, being at Versailles, he had addressed a long despatch to Von Schweinitz, Prussian Ambassador at Vienna, which was a veritable invitation to the Austro-Hungarian Government: "Germany and Austro-Hungary, we venture in confidence to hope, will regard one another with mutual good-will, and will join hands to assure the development and happiness of both countries." [1]

Count von Beust had welcomed these first overtures with effusion while reserving his opinions as to the sentiments of Prussia, "which never has been and never will be a sincere friend"; he had, in a report submitted to the Emperor Francis Joseph, clearly demonstrated that Austria-Hungary, not being strong enough to oppose the success of Germany, must content herself with profiting by circumstances which further gave some value to her neu-

[1] *Memoires du Comte de Beust*, t. ii. p. 441.

trality. Then, after having made a last effort to find a counterpoise to the success of Prussia by the meeting of a Congress and the constitution of a European Tribunal of Arbitration,—this is the time when Count von Wimpffen receives instructions to make advances to Bismarck in favour of a European peace, advances which had alarmed the latter so much—he had taken his line.

Count von Beust not being a native of the Austrian Provinces, and judging the situation, less in accordance with racial tendencies, than as a statesman, was too shrewd not to understand that if the directors of the Austro-Hungarian policy knew how to stand apart from internal struggles, and if they were preoccupied exclusively with the destinies of the Empire, the alliance which forced itself upon them was the French alliance.

France, in fact, is the only Power which in Central or Eastern Europe has no race affinity which solicits her, no decisive political aim which attracts her, no interest in contradiction with the greatness of Austria-Hungary. But the errors of Napoleon III had spoiled or warped all that. As Count von Beust says, "The Emperor Napoleon had never understood the policy of Europe." As for Prince Bismarck, with an extraordinary fertility of means he took advantage of the universal confusion to embroil interests and systems still further.

Count von Beust

Count von Beust then, acting as a Minister of a State, and not as a Minister of a Party, had persevered, as long as he could, in the system of forming connexions with France. But the fortune of war had pronounced against this policy. The Germanic populations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were exultant. The irons were already in

the fire for the fall of the Hohenwarth Ministry. Hungary declared herself strongly in favour of the German policy. It was imperatively necessary to make the first steps towards Berlin: even before Count Andrassy, "the compulsory route" was there. In February, 1871, an exchange of notes defined this new swing of the political compass. At the same time Count von Bellegarde, Aide-de-camp General, was sent to Berlin to congratulate the Emperor William on his return to his capital.

Interviews of the two Emperors at Gastein

Bismarck, who at all times particularly affected watering-place diplomacy, wished to make the reconciliation more startling, and he contrived three meetings of the two German Emperors during the summer of 1871 at Itschl, at Gastein, at Salzburg. Through Count von Beust we have the story of these interviews, so pregnant in their consequences for the future of Europe. We know that the Emperor William, prompted by Prince Bismarck, did everything he could to soften the bitterness of the first moments to the Emperor Francis Joseph.

It was then that the sovereign prudence which had dictated the Peace of Nikolsburg could be appreciated. Germany now again found Austria in her reach, and she had only to make all the profit she could out of her own moderation: "Heaven had blessed the Prussian arms," said the Emperor William. But he, the King, as one must recognize, had shown himself generous. The chief fault lay with Napoleon III, who had not known how to attack the Prussian army in the rear, and who had thus brought about the collapse of Austria, and, in consequence, that of France. Also, he, the King of Prussia, was unwilling to believe, at that time, in the

neutrality of France, and *he preserved a lively sense of gratitude to the Emperor Napoleon for it.* . . . Now that the last war, *as undesired by him as it was unforeseen*, had at last placed Prussia at the head of Germany, *equally against his, the King of Prussia's, wish*, he has, as Emperor, no longer any desire other than to maintain good relations with Austria; in saying that, he laid great stress upon the point that he perfectly understood that the past was not easily forgotten, and that he strongly rejoiced in the re-establishment of the friendly relations between the two Empires." [1]

Interviews between von Beust and Bismarck

Count von Beust also had long conversations with Prince Bismarck. He entered freely into the project of a *pacific league*, which was skilfully presented to him to cover whatever painful features there might be in the situation as it affected Austria. Prince Bismarck made no propositions with a view to positive engagements registered in a treaty: the talk was only of "frank, durable relations, based upon a mutual good will, equal confidence on both sides." But he recognized without difficulty that "Austria had no other policy to follow than that of free unreserved acceptance of the accomplished fact in Germany."

Bismarck took the Austro-Hungarian Chancellor on his weak side by telling him that he, and no other person, had formulated the theory of reconciliation in his last speech to the delegations; he opened for the first time, with very great prudence it is true, the perspective of that policy in the East which was to prove the illusion and perhaps the

[1] *Mémoires du Comte de Beust*, t. ii. pp. 496–7.

great disappointment of Austria in the combination of the reconciliation.

First Indications of the "Oriental Policy" in Austria-Hungary

"It went so far," says von Beust, "that the passage of my declaration pointing to an eventuality, which we are not to favour but to turn to our advantage,—to wit, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire,—that this passage again occurred in the developments of the German Imperial Chancellor, and he obligingly noted that a great Power is not conceivable which would not make a vital condition of its facilities for expansion."

Simultaneous precautions of the two Empires against Russia

Meanwhile Count von Beust with real ability drew advantages from the resolution with which he had known how to take his line, by turning the conversation upon Russia. He then obtained declarations of an important bearing from Bismarck: "It was more important for me," he himself says, "to hear Prince Bismarck characterize the relations between Prussia and Russia. . . . At Berlin there is no wish to allow themselves to be drawn into an attitude hostile to Russia because of us, *but there is a hope to win a more independent situation in face of Russia*, thanks to good relations with us."[1]

In one word the two Chancellors were enraptured at finding themselves in such perfect confidence, at a time when they had so much reason to distrust one another: "Our two minds," said Von Beust, some days afterwards, "found that they fitted like a key in a lock."

The "key" was soon to refuse to turn in the

[1] *Mémoires du Comte de Beust*, t. ii. p. 487.

"lock." In fact the step that he had just taken had an entirely unexpected sequel for the Austrian Minister. Hardly had he returned to Vienna when the Hohenwarth Ministry fell, and he, Count von Beust, was obliged to follow it in its fall; more and more to his surprise, he saw himself taken at a disadvantage and replaced by Count Andrassy.

He had himself, at Gastein, facilitated the meeting of the Hungarian Minister with Bismarck: "I, who was always a good simple creature," he says, "I contrived that the prayers of Count Andrassy should be heard, so that he and Count Hohenwarth received an invitation. I neither concerned myself with the relations between Count Andrassy and Prince Bismarck, nor with those between Count Andrassy and Count Hohenwarth; I don't think I even listened to what I was told about it. . . ." [1]

Diplomatists gain more by listening than by talking, even when they talk well. Furthermore what did it matter? This disappearance of Count von Beust was destined.

The Fall of von Beust

In Austro-Hungary the "imperial" policy was giving way to the policy of parties, the policy of races. Slavs, Germans, Hungarians, sacrificed everything to their internal dissensions. The active policy of the Empire of the Hapsburgs had been for long years, owing to the skill of Bismarck, enclosed in this circus with no way out, in which the three dominant nationalities follow one another without ever catching one another up. A new situation wanted new men, and it was logical that Count von Beust should give place to Count Andrassy.

In the very interview, which had been the

[1] *Mémoires du Comte de Beust*, t. ii. p. 501.

decisive hour for himself, Count von Beust had, as we have seen, by a last stroke of diplomatic skill, singularly weakened the advantages of the combination from the German point of view, when he had obtained from Bismarck the declarations relative to Russia.

This was a dart which was to remain in the wound. The combination so long prepared and so slowly ripened by Bismarck had one weak point: to approach Austria was inevitably one day or another to part from Russia. Furthermore Prince Bismarck foresaw this consequence, and accepted it as inevitable: he has said so himself on several occasions in his *Souvenirs*. Then on the morrow of that war in which Bismarck's Germany had been aided, sustained, saved perhaps by Russia, she was preparing to disengage herself by a slow evolution from the ties which attached her to the Empire of the Czars. She resigned herself, she too, to "amazing the world by her ingratitude."

Precautions with regard to Russia

For the moment by means of very demonstrative attentions a balm was successfully applied to the soreness provoked in Russia by the interview at Gastein. Prince Gortschakoff, on the occasion of a short visit which he paid to Berlin in the beginning of November, was hailed with flattering attentions and comforting declarations.[1] Prince Bismarck was going to employ all his seduction, all the family authority, which the Emperor William exercised over his nephew Alexander II, to divert the first suspicions and dress the first wounds.

As for France, the perpetual object of the anxieties

[1] *Gabriac*, p. 219.

of the Bismarckian policy, she suffered this first diplomatic consequence of her defeat almost without noticing it.

M. Thiers, absorbed in other preoccupations, made no effort to parry or deaden the blow. And this was only the beginning!

Isolation of France

It was proposed to create against France "a new order of Europe from which she was excluded." She was shut up in a kind of "moral blockade." All the Conservatives of Europe were hounded on against France, the Republican. Rival interests were stirred up against her, whatever they were, or from wherever they came. All weapons were good. When she was concerned the rules of that policy of non-intervention, ordinarily so proud a boast, were abandoned. By an obvious contradiction preparations were made to resume the worst procedure against her on the charge that this same France, "Republican" and "socialist," was covenanting with Rome and the black reaction.

No chain was strong enough, no cannon ball heavy enough and firmly enough rivetted to the foot of France to enable Bismarck to feel himself secured and guaranteed against the resurrection "of a Power vanquished and dismembered, but not subjected, whose vitality appeared to him a permanent menace, which was at the same time a cause of irritation and remorse to him."[1]

M. Pouyer-Quertier at Berlin

The success obtained by the reconciliation with Austria-Hungary seems to have had the effect of relaxing the nervous tension of the Federal Chancellor for the moment.

[1] *Marquis de Gabriac*, p. 184.

Thus tranquillized he showed himself more accommodating; this is the time when he lent himself to the negotiations for the payment of the second milliard; and received M. Pouyer-Quertier at Berlin, and concluded the conventions of the 12th of October, 1871. At the same time he gave instructions to the plenipotentiaries at Frankfort which permitted them to settle the questions left undetermined after the peace.

Lastly, he informed our *chargé-d'affaires* of the Emperor's desire to see the relations between the two countries re-established on a normal footing by the respective nomination and installation of the two ambassadors.

However, at the last moment, a most painful incident permitted Bismarck to declare publicly the sentiments by which he proposed to abide with regard to France.

At Chelles, in the district of Meaux, a gardener named Bertin had on the 10th of August, 1871, committed an act of attempt to murder upon the person of a Prussian sergeant-major, Krafft. On the 5th of September following a certain Tonnelet had killed at the hamlet of Montereau, Montreuil district (Seine), an infantryman of the second Thuringian regiment.

On being arrested Bertin and Tonnelet were sent before the Court of Assizes, the first before that of Seine-et-Marne, the second that of the Seine. In spite of the very clear indictments of the public officials they were acquitted by the jury on the 14th and 24th of November.

At the same time two acts of violence upon German soldiers were committed in the Department of the Marne, at Épernay and at Ay. The murderers

having been arrested, were handed over to the German authorities, and shot on the 27th of November.

These events produced a lively impression in Germany. General von Manteuffel received an order to carry out strictly the regulations of the state of siege. For three days a rigorous treatment was inflicted upon Épernay.

M. Thiers, in his anxiety not to let the incident be aggravated, had, in his message of the 7th of December, touched on the question at the tribune of the Assembly and had not hesitated to blame the jurymen: "Those who believe that it is not a murder to strike down a foreigner must be told that this is a detestable error; that a foreigner is a human being; that the holy laws of humanity exist for him too. We entreat the jurymen not to share so deplorable an error. . . ."

Irritable Polemics

Prince Bismarck did not consider these declarations sufficient in spite of their formal character; no more did he listen to the temperate counsels of General von Manteuffel; he refused to take into consideration the apt remark of M. de Rémusat, Minister of Foreign Affairs, when he wrote: "The foreign occupation is a permanent cause of resentment and reprisals. . . . The continuance of such a situation only serves to make it more irritating and less endurable. . . ." Instead of appeasing, he thought it right to pour in an extra dose of venom, and it was at this time that he addressed a despatch to Count von Arnim, which was to be communicated to M. de Rémusat, and contained a passage, which, in Europe no less than in France, woke a most painful echo: "The fact that the sentiment of right is so completely extinguished in France, even in the circles in which

we seek by preference the friends of political order and the guarantees of justice, puts Europe in a position to appreciate the difficulties encountered by the French Government in its efforts to set the sentiment of order and right free from the pressure which the passionate temperament of the masses brings to bear upon it. . . . The high degree of moral education and the sentiment of right and honour, which are peculiar to the German people, exclude any idea of analogous conduct. . . . In the future, if extradition were refused to us, we should be obliged to arrest and carry off French hostages, and even, in the case of extreme necessity, to have recourse to measures more extended in their range. . . ."

Exasperation of Bismarck.

This time it was judged everywhere that the limits had been overstepped. General von Manteuffel himself expressed his formal disapproval, and the sentiments of a good number of his fellow-countrymen, in an interview with M. de Saint Vallier, of which the narrative was immediately sent to M. Thiers: "I am leaving General von Manteuffel," wrote M. de Saint Vallier on the 24th of December; "he has just expressed to me the painful sentiments which are roused in him by reading the unqualifiable despatch addressed on the 10th of December by Prince Bismarck to Count von Arnim, and published the day before yesterday by the Berlin newspapers. The General is confounded at the perfidy of this mendacious and libellous document, at its tone of bullying violence, and still more at the outrage done to us by its publication; he asks himself in terror, "Whither is Bismarck going, what mysterious aim is he pursuing, if he wishes to wake up hatreds, begin the war over again, crush and dis-

member us entirely? . . . He is anxious for us, anxious for him, anxious for his sovereign and his country. . . . The public sentiment of the whole of Europe will turn against us," he added, "as formerly against Napoleon I, and I tremble to think that we may end by paying dearly for these arrogant acts of violence inspired by the intoxication of victory." And General von Manteuffel was at pains to refute point by point the assertions contained in the despatch which he condemned so severely.[1]

Reply of M. Thiers

M. Thiers displayed in these dangerous and painful passages a coolness, an authority, a dignity which do him the highest honour. This is the point at which he recovered the advantage over the "barbarian with genius." On the 29th of January he replied to M. de Saint-Vallier: "Be sure and repeat to General von Manteuffel that we mean peace, that we give very decisive proofs to that effect: the first is our great eagerness to pay the first two milliards, and, what is still more convincing, our preparation to *anticipate* the payment of the three last. If we preferred to liquidate by war and not by peace, we should take advantage of the treaty which gives us till 1874 to pay the second part of the indemnity, and we should thus reserve to ourselves the chances of events. Now, very positively, the 650 millions once paid in May (those which were actually paid in March) we shall enter upon negotiations whose aim will be to combine a successive payment, and one beginning immediately, with the evacuation of the territory under occupation. I have limited my

[1] See the whole incident in the collection of documents emanating from M. Thiers, *Occupation et Libération du Territoire*, t. i. p. 104 *et sqq.*

political task to what I have called the reorganization of France, and I have entered in it, first, peace, the re-establishment of order, the balance of the finances, and the reconstitution of the army. That is my avowed and avowable task, and I evidently cannot leave it incomplete without taking from my management of affairs its true and solid motives."

It seems that Bismarck himself had some sentiment of the want of proportion which marked his last acts; for without insisting on the comminatory formulas, which fell without effect, he caused an exchange of letters to be proceeded to by the two Chancelleries, which consecrated the nomination of ambassadors..

Appointment of the Ambassadors at Paris and Berlin

M. Thiers appointed the Vicomte de Gontaut-Biron to occupy the Embassy at Berlin in the grave and difficult circumstances through which we were passing, a man who was head of one of the oldest families of the French aristocracy, a man of perfect tact, tried loyalty, accepting the heavy burden which was laid upon him with no other thought than the desire of the public welfare. M. de Gontaut-Biron was successful in quickly creating an exceptional position for himself at Berlin.

The Vicomte de Gontaut-Biron

Bismarck, whose suspicion was on several occasions awakened by the relations of M. de Gontaut-Biron with the Court, and particularly with the Empress Augusta, judges him, however, in fairly favourable terms in his *Souvenirs*: "Gontaut-Biron acted in the interests of the Legitimist party, to which he belonged by birth. . . . A skilful and very amiable diplomatist, of ancient family, he found points of contact with the Empress Augusta. . . . Owing

to the privilege of being highly born he experienced no difficulty in creating himself a position in Court circles, and had created relations for himself, which often permitted him, by one road or another, to reach even the Emperor."[1]

Some time after the arrival of the Comte de Gontaut-Biron at Berlin, M. Thiers was able to congratulate himself on this appointment. He wrote wittily to the new Ambassador on the 28th of January, 1872: "People are very much pleased with you, and I am praised for the selection that I have made. I am quite proud of it . . . I have thus won my action against you, and I think that you will be charmed to have lost it. *Gentleness*, *dignity*, *common sense*, all these have succeeded with Prince Bismarck. The nobleman, who is of the old Sèvres paste and not of the new, has further many claims upon the King, who at heart is Legitimist and not Bonapartist. . . . As for me, who am an old philosopher solely anxious for the affairs of the State, I am charmed with the success of your personality, be it white or blue. . . ."

Count von Arnim

On the other side Prince Bismarck appointed, to represent Germany in France, one of the friends of his childhood, Count Harry von Arnim, an intelligent diplomatist, but one whose serious faults, levity, causticity, want of judgment and moderation, susceptibility, the Chancellor himself was soon obliged to unveil in a scandalous legal process. Count von Arnim presented himself from the very first as the representative of grasping victory; he meddled with domestic intrigues, favouring the different parties of the opposition,

[1] *Prince de Bismarck, Memoires*, t. ii. p. 208.

and publicly declaring himself opposed to M. Thiers. The unexampled revelation of his correspondence made in the year 1874 proves that the French Government needed the greatest patience to tolerate in its near neighbourhood this dangerous presence and fretful countenance. The restive spirit of the Ambassador ended by turning against his own chief, who, sure of the confidence of the Emperor, had the necessary strength and the authority to recall a high functionary to the rules of discipline, who, in fact, had never succeeded in bringing himself into line with any of his duties.

Now, Bismarck, in making this appointment, knew with whom he was dealing. In 1872 one of the general officers possessing the greatest authority in the German army, Von Berg, expressed himself in these terms with reference to the Ambassador: "He is by no means the man whom we would want at Paris. . . . He is an ambitious invalid and hypochondriac; he persecuted his cousin, Bismarck, to get the Paris appointment from him. He is at him to-day to get another: he is discontented; he has been so all his life; he will always be so, and will always be desiring something different from what he has." Count von Beust, on his side, relates the following anecdote, too amusing and too conclusive not to be reproduced: "We were dining at Gastein with Prince Bismarck at the Swiss Châlet in a kind of summer-house from which we could see the street. All of a sudden we noticed the arrival of a post-chaise, and we assumed that this must be the Count von Arnim, who had just been appointed Ambassador at Paris. I at once sent some one to meet the carriage, and invited Count von Arnim to dine with us. We

saw that the carriage had stopped, but our guest did not show himself. At last we discovered that he had got out, and was occupied, behind the post-chaise, in changing his dress, while we ourselves were arrayed in morning costume: 'And they would work high policy with a creature like that!' said Bismarck."[1]

Twenty years afterwards, when Prince Bismarck wrote his memoirs, and when he would have been pleased to show himself indulgent to the Ambassador, he again epitomized in the following terms his opinion of the man whom he had chosen to preside over the new relations between France and Germany: "It is a great pity for our diplomacy that the unusual aptitudes of Count von Arnim were not served by a firmness of character and a loyalty on a level with his high abilities." In 1871 his defects were not displeasing. However that may be, relations were re-established between the two great Peoples who had just measured their strength in a terrible war. In Germany the joy of victory, and the sensation of preponderant authority did not, however, give a full confidence in the future. There was after this enormous success a bitterness at heart and a kind of disenchantment. In France the work of resurrection was roughly sketched out, but it was still very delicate, and remained exposed to the caprice of events.

[1] *Count von Beust, Memoires*, t. ii. p. 484.

CHAPTER VII

PARLIAMENTARY LABOURS

The Winter Session of the National Assembly—Message of December 7, 1871—Groups and Parties—Versailles and the National Assembly—The Orleans Princes in the Chamber—M. de Falloux and the Question of the Flag—Fiscal Debates—First Resignation of M. Thiers—The Parliamentary Fusion—Bonapartist Propaganda—Budget of 1872—Gambetta in the Provinces; M. Thiers in Paris.

I

The Return, December 1871

THE weather was cold at Versailles when the session was re-opened in the early days of December. M. Thiers was out of temper and somewhat discouraged. This establishment did not please him; he would have preferred to live at the Elysée; but a formal decision of the Assembly had imposed upon him as an official residence the city of the Grand Monarque. The Hôtel de la Préfecture where he resided was called "the Palace of Penance."

The question of the return to Paris was still on the order of the day. It had been raised at the end of the last Session by a motion from the Right aiming at fixing the Government Offices permanently at Versailles. Once again on this occasion "an indictment was brought against Paris." M.

Thiers had opposed this motion, and he had won the day. On the other hand, at the opening of the Session, MM. Duchâtel and Humbert had demanded the return to Paris, but the Government having stood aside in this fresh debate, the motion had been rejected.

The Assembly endured the inconveniences of its own decisions with ill-humour. The north wind blew between the station and the Palace, down the long avenues, and the arrangements were poor when the sittings began.

M. Thiers and the Assembly

M. Thiers, who was afraid of the squalls which might arise from a majority that had lost its bearings, thought he ought to deal with it gently. He felt that he no longer held the same authority over it which had been his during the previous session. When he appeared before it to read his opening message he was frequently interrupted; he was listened to "with toleration, from habit, to be done with it." In all this there was a good deal of perversity, and also a slight spirit of mischief. It was thought that "the old fellow was breaking." He was nervous. The incidents with Germany, which he was obliged to dissemble, complicated his task. Exhausting, if not his arguments at least his patience, he spoke too often "of going." He suggested the idea and the wish to take him at his word.

His sentiments are reflected in the long rambling message which he read to the Assembly on the 7th of December. He finds fault with everybody a little: first, according to his custom, with the Empire: "We must never forget the state in which the Imperial Government left the finances of France"; then with the Legitimists: "We must

be prepared to endow France with a definitive system of government, keeping the conditions of modern society clearly before our eyes." But he does not utter the name of the Republic; he opposes the position taken up by Gambetta by upholding the sovereign right of the Assembly, and he shirks those constitutional necessities of which he had spoken with so much vivacity in September.

Politics having for their object, he said to the Assembly, the establishment of a definite Government, it is upon you alone that all eyes are fixed, and we should be trespassing on your rights if we took a too precipitate initiative in this direction.

As for myself, overwhelmed with fatigue, and sometimes with pain, when I turn aside for a moment from incessant work and think of our misfortunes, I have accepted one task only: to re-organize the country, broken by her fall, by repairing, outside her relations, inside her administration, her finances, her army, while maintaining strict order while this task is being accomplished, and holding myself always ready to hand over to you the deposit, with which you have intrusted me, intact, in its original form, scrupulously and loyally preserved.

Here it is in fact, he continues, just as you intrusted it to me; re-organized in part, and above all in conformity with the contract made between us. I restored it to you. . . . What will you do with it? You are sovereign, or the word "right" is only a vain saying, for you are the elected, the freely elected representatives of the country.

To make proposals to you to-day upon any point which has to do with the constitution would be on the part of my colleagues and myself an act of temerity, an invasion of your rights. But we too are representatives of the country, and we too have duties to fulfil as members of this Assembly and members of the Government.

When you yourselves, in raising the grave questions which are the preoccupation of your minds, shall challenge us to make an explanation as to their solution, we will reply to you with frankness and loyalty. Up to that point my colleagues and myself had only an account to render to you, a loyal and accurate account; we have done so.

Pointing with some temper at the mischief which

was in course of development, he attacked party politics :

> Collectively the country is wise. But the parties are not so. From them, and from them alone, is anything to be feared. Against them alone you must be on your guard.

These wise counsels of M. Thiers, marked with a kind of hesitation, which was for the first time noticed in him, were not to receive attention.

The majority of the Assembly, surprised by the result of the Departmental elections, put out of countenance by the failure of the fusion, felt its impotence, and abandoned itself with a sullen fury to its passions, expecting everything from an incident which it had not even the determination to bring about ; violent measures were still kept under control by a reserve of rectitude and honesty. One of the members of this majority defines it very accurately : " The Chamber is worn out. Incapable of decision, of will, it would have walked honourably along a road already marked out ; to open its own road, above all recognize it, is too difficult a task for it. It hesitates, it advances, it retreats : but it will neither break off, nor break up. It feels that it is being betrayed by M. Thiers (this was the current style of the Right) ; that he aspires to throw it overboard ; that he will do so on the first opportunity ; but it waits, and has not the courage to open the struggle."

Parliamentary Groups

During the period of nearly a year that the Assembly had been sitting, it had slowly organized itself according to the parliamentary traditions. Opinions had been modified, groups had been constituted by means of those mutual concessions which weaken convictions but create party discipline.

The Right had divided into Extreme Right, Right, and Right Centre. On the Extreme Right were noblemen, sincere, haughty, stiff in their monarchical loyalty and their absolute submission to the will of the " King."

The Right, more supple and more politic, applied itself patiently to the problem of squaring the circle by trying to reconcile the Monarchy by right divine with the victories of the Revolution.

The Right-Centre, in which the Orleanists abounded, was ready to make concessions, whether to right or left, provided that the mission of saving the country and Conservative principles was confided to one of the members of the House of Orleans, either the Comte de Paris or the Duc d'Aumale.[1]

[1] It may be useful, in order to facilitate the reading of the authorities for this period, to recall the exact meaning of certain terms used to designate the different groups of the Right.

1. *Réunion des Réservoirs*, a meeting held at the hotel of the same name and including all the deputies of the Right up to the time of the manifesto of the Comte de Chambord, July 5, 1871. After this manifesto and the signature of the Larcy note : " The personal inspirations of the Comte de Chambord are his." The meeting at the Réservoirs divided.

2. *Right Centre*, composed of deputies not admitting the white flag ; it was a closed group, to whose meetings only its own members were admitted.

3. *Chevaux-Légers*, Light Infantry. This group comprised the deputies ready to shout " Hurrah ! for the King anyhow ! " It was directed by the chiefs whom the special mandate of the Comte de Chambord marked out for its confidence : MM. Lucien Brun, de Carayon-Latour, de Cazenove de Pradines, de la Rochette.

4. *Moderate Right*, constituted on the initiative of M. Ernoul with the object of uniting the Right Centre and the Light Infantry. With this idea was drawn up by M. de Meaux the programme of the Right of February 1872. Thus a fresh group (Réunion Colbert) was formed out of the signatories to

Towards the left a new group was seen to be slowly forming by an unconscious and almost imperceptible effort, whose development was to have a considerable influence upon events: the Left Centre.

This group had been founded in a little apartment in the Rue Duplessis at Versailles. There, in the beginning, used to meet M. de Marcère, Deputy of the North and Councillor at the Court of Appeal at Douai; M. Christophle, a former Prefect under the Government of National Defence; MM. Félix Renault and Duréault, Deputies for Saône-et-Loire; M. Gailly, a rich manufacturer from the Vosges. These Deputies had made up their minds to accept the Republican form. They thought that it might give the Government of the country a stability, which the different Monarchies, established and overturned since 1814, had not been able to secure for her. But for that purpose they claimed to surround the Republic with guarantees intended to satisfy and group together all the moderate elements. A programme was drawn up, and the new group soon reckoned some sixty members. They seriously discussed the question whether it should be called "The Union of Republican Conservatives" or the "Union of Conservative Republicans." After a time it was numerous enough to leave its humble quarters in the Rue Duplessis, and meet in one of the rooms of the Versailles town-hall.

Gradually men occupying a considerable social position were seen to come to it: MM. Casimir-

this manifesto, which was to serve as a connecting link between the different fractions of the monarchical party.

5. Lastly, the *Changarnier* meeting, including Conservatives who were prevented for diverse reasons from inscribing their names on the lists of the more strictly defined groups.

Périer, de Rémusat, Léon Say, Dufaure. They were for the most part friends of M. Thiers; M. Casimir-Périer notably, whose name had so high a significance, had said to M. Jules Simon in the early days of the formation of the Government: "I am with you."

M. Thiers appreciated "his perfect uprightness, the vivacity of his mind, his talent for writing, and his experience of affairs." He was glad to offer him the portfolio of Home Affairs when it became vacant by the death of M. Lambrecht.

These men had required real courage to separate themselves from the influences of education, family, surroundings, and to endure the objurgations and anathemas which pursued them for long years.

The Left Centre had declared from the first, though timidly, for the Republic; then, carried on by the manifestations of public opinion, it had formed, along with its hesitations, its convictions; criticism itself had pledged it. Lastly, it was on the motion of one of its members, M. Rivet, that the National Assembly had given an embryo of a constitution to the Republic. In the session which was on the point of opening this group was to take consistency and strengthen itself afresh.

The Republican Union

Beyond the Left Centre the Assembly was further divided into two groups: the Left comprising the Moderate Republicans who followed MM. Jules Grévy, Jules Simon, Jules Favre, and who, in the main, had devoted themselves to the person of M. Thiers; the *Republican Union*, who were composed chiefly of the friends of M. Gambetta. These last called themselves for choice the Radical Republicans, and the name given them was the "reds." They had a programme of reforms, which they developed in

their professions of faith, or in public meetings, but the realization of this they deferred till the definite establishment of the Republic. They were divided from the Moderate Republicans at the time of war to the bitter end; they energetically refused to the Assembly the power of drawing up a constitution; they were in a condition of open rupture with M. Thiers on several important questions, notably on the military question, and on the economical question, for they were free-traders. Meanwhile they bowed before his authority, they handled him delicately, because they began to count on him to found the Republic; they nearly always supported him with their votes, and on well chosen occasions, with their praises, which it was affected to consider compromising.

During the sittings, on divisions, in the lobbies these organizations, for the rest very elastic, ill restrained the stormy and agitated crowd which formed the Assembly. France had never known one so numerous.

Physiognomy of the Assembly

Seven hundred and thirty-eight Representatives met in the great opera house of the Palace at Versailles, built by Gabriel for the festivities of Louis XV, in chairs covered with red velvet, with the Tribune in mahogany raised upon a double staircase, and with balconies overhanging the hall of session, and always filled with a numerous public of journalists, sightseers, and women. A perpetual movement of coming and going kept lifting the red velvet curtains over the doors, beyond which was a lobby constructed upon the former stage, now transformed; from thence by passages the *Galérie des bustes* was reached, full of the lofty figures in the history of the nation, but icy between its stone walls.

In the hall sits M. Grévy in the President's chair, in a black frock coat, his face placid, and half asleep, attentive none the less, to the numerous Representatives who come to consult him, or simply ask him for tickets. On the tiers very marked types, faces celebrated or simply known: M. de Lorgéril, the Breton Bard; M. de Belcastel, always ready to hurl an interruption; M. de Tillancourt, who has retained a reputation as a framer of smart remarks from the Imperial Chamber; M. de Lasteyrie, with his everlasting green shade; M. Emanuel Arago, whose stentorian voice suddenly dominates over the tumult; M. Schoelcher, dressed in black and affecting the reserve and correctness of a perfect gentleman; Colonel Langlois, who hurls himself upon the tribune at the smallest incident affecting the vivacity of his nerves and sentiments; M. Ernest Picard, abundant and good-humoured; M. Jules Simon, with his round shoulders; M. Jules Favre, with his hollow features and melancholy air; M. Dufaure, hidden behind the high collar of his brown frock-coat; M. Littré, shrunken under his blue velvet skull-cap; Mgr. Dupanloup, much surrounded and distributing indications, which are orders to some of the younger Representatives, who immediately spread them among the benches; M. Gambetta, already stout, his head back, half lying upon his seat, very attentive to the debates, having beside him the shirt collar of the legendary Garnier-Pagès, and at his feet old M. Corbon.

Often the sitting is animated. Orators are numerous in this Assembly, which might have been thought to have been recruited at hazard: impassioned orators with faith in the authority and force of words; on the Right is the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, clear, ardent, natural; or M. Ernoul, a

copious and well informed speaker; or Mgr. Dupanloup, who is listened to with consideration; or M. Cazenove de Pradines, who speaks in the midst of universal respect; in the Centre we have M. Thiers, who, whatever may be the subject, always keeps everybody under his charm; or M. Jules Simon, whose voice is like a caress; or M. Dufaure, who drives an argument as a peasant drives a plough; or M. Ernest Picard, full of go, wit, and smartness. On the left we have Challemel-Lacour, brought to the Assembly by the elections of the 7th of January, 1872, whose biting vehemence will soon be a revelation; we have M. Jules Ferry, laborious and harsh, but vigorous and penetrating; we have Gambetta, whose appearance at the tribune imposes silence, and whose speaking raises the storm.

Out of the sitting, inside the Palace, and in its precincts, parliamentary business and the working of passions are in still greater animation. Committees meet everywhere in the rooms of the Palace: committees of preparation, committees of inquiry, committees of administration, or special groups. The famous meeting of the Reservoirs counts no less than two hundred members; the Left Centre sits in a room in the Town Hall. Versailles is a humming hive. The throng of the ancient Court is seen again, but black and dismal under the parliamentary frock-coats; headlong confusion, mutual espial, useless and dangerous chattering, infinite intrigues. Suitors stop deputies in the street and whisper into their ears their grievances or their disappointments. Power is there; testimonials are wanted, or recommendations. Men snuff the wind. Representatives pass full of business, holding out hands full of promises.

At the Hôtel des Réservoirs there is a fight for the tables, a continual coming and going of Ministers, deputies, journalists, functionaries, suitors, sight-seers, with whom are mingled, on the days of the great sittings, a numerous public of women in elegant costumes; they give distinction. There are laughing, joking, cries, witty remarks. The national good temper has the upper hand, even in the days of misfortune. Never, perhaps, has the political world had more life than in these years at Versailles.

A special physiognomy and a singularly picturesque character is further given to these sittings by the common departure and return from Paris to Versailles, and from Versailles to Paris, in the famous "parliamentary trains." Every day of sitting a crowd in their Sunday best, resembling nothing so much as an excursion for the races, invades the Saint-Lazare station. By hundreds, by thousands, the same faces present themselves at the appointed hour.

The waiting-rooms, the platforms, bustle with personages clothed in black, their arms bent round heavy portfolios stuffed with papers; they crowd into the carriages; the journalists following the deputies or the Ministers trying to catch a word from their lips: on the faces a shadow which might lead to an indiscretion. Contact, inevitable meetings, unforeseen proximities, reciprocal courtesies, the window lowered, and the window broken multiply the incidents which further complicate the already great complication of relations around a deliberative and sovereign Assembly. For years the whole political world of France spent half its days in a railway carriage; perhaps there was no exaggeration in saying that this existence, compulsorily instable

and nomadic, at times continued its futile hurry into the hall and sittings of the Assembly.

Under these conditions M. Thiers was to govern. His weariness is intelligible.

The Receptions of M. Thiers

In the desire to give some unity to this always incoherent, frequently undisciplined crowd, he had instituted those dinners, those daily receptions, at which the whole political world was welcomed. This was yet another fatigue for him; but he liked meeting his company there and displaying himself.

There one found the enormous M. Batbie and the charming M. Beulé, the inevitable Guyot-Montpayroux, or the taciturn Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, General Trochu, eloquent and fretful; there was to be seen the Duc d'Aumale and even, it is said, M. Gambetta. M. Thiers, with his back to the chimney-piece, improvised a speech, sharpened his arguments, or simply gave the reins to his own happy verbosity. See him performing a whole riding school of graceful evolutions around a deputy whom he wishes to win; he discourses to him at length about spontaneous generation, about Genesis, recognizes (since he is speaking to an avowed Catholic) that all the certain discoveries of modern science agree with the stories in the Bible. "He, M. Thiers, has given many years of his life to these studies. He has much esteem for the works of Pasteur." "He made me sit beside him," says his interlocutor; "he treated me the whole time with special distinction. . . . We spoke much of my report!" And in spite of all mistrust the deputy goes out conquered, or, at least, charmed.[1]

[1] Martial Delpit, *Journal*, p. 225.

The tension of the relations between M. Thiers and the Assembly declared itself at the moment of the return to business. M. de Malleville was not re-elected a vice-President.

M. Jules Simon, Minister of Public Instruction, brought forward an important Bill on primary education, which formed part of the plan of re-organization, and which, deferring the two principles of this subject, that the school should be free and in lay hands, restricted itself to declaring the obligation. Although everybody was agreed in recognizing the necessity of diffusing instruction among the masses, the committee nominated by the Assembly was, by a great majority, hostile to the bill of M. Jules Simon. Mgr. Dupanloup was their leader. The bill was never to come up for discussion.

Changes in the Ministry

In the debate of the 2nd of February, 1872, on the motion of Duchâtel-Humbert in relation to the return of the Assembly to Paris, M. Casimir-Périer, who had made it a question of confidence, was beaten by 366 votes to 310. He sent in his resignation on the 6th. Thus M. Thiers lost one after another the supporters on whom he most relied. Already his Ministry, formed for less than a year, had seen withdraw or disappear MM. Ernest Picard and Jules Favre, who resigned, the first on the 28th of May, 1871, the second on the 2nd of August; now he loses M. Casimir-Périer, who had succeeded to M. Lambrecht, deceased, at the Office of Home Affairs. M. Casimir-Périer was replaced by M. Victor Lefranc, of the Republican Left, who leaves the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture to M. de Goulard, a member of the Right Centre, a personal friend of the President of

the Republic. At one moment, on the 20th of December, 1871, in connexion with an interpellation by M. Raoul Duval, who aimed at the part taken by M. Ranc at the time of the Commune, M. Dufaure himself had been imperilled, and only escaped by the intervention of an order of the day brought forward by a member of the irreconcilable Right, M. Pàris. These were irritating incidents of daily occurrence; as President Grévy said, "they are always *incidenting*."

At the opening of this session, at the time when M. Thiers warned the Assembly against party politics, all the parties were in agitation at once. Since the check to the fusion each of them would have liked to anticipate rival enterprises, and hurry on events to its own profit. It was a competition, a kind of steeplechase, in which all watched all, in which the most noisy and the most violent believed themselves to be the most useful. It often happens thus in Assemblies: words pass for deeds, and agitation for action.

II

Attitude of the Orleans Princes

The Princes of Orleans had given the signal. They were impatient to get out of the part, in some sense a part of effacement, to which they were confined on the one side by the will of the Comte de Chambord, and on the other by the pledges which they had taken to M. Thiers not to sit in the Assembly.

On Saturday, the 16th of December, a rumour spread that the Princes had decided to present themselves in the Assembly on the following Monday.

The groups of the Left met; the Republican Left protested against the presence of the Princes,

which "confused the work of the re-organization of the country."

On the appointed day, when everybody is expecting the Duc D'Aumale and the Prince de Joinville, they do not appear. But every Deputy finds on his desk a number of the *Journal des Débats* containing letters addressed by them to their constituents. A blue pencil-mark obligingly indicates to the representatives the interesting passage.

After having recalled their undertaking not to sit, the Princes affirmed that this pledge was temporary in character and revocable. They then declared that circumstances had changed; since the continuance of the powers of M. Thiers having been voted, they considered themselves, for their part, released; but M. Thiers interpreting otherwise the act which bound them, they appealed to the decision of a "higher tribunal," which was evidently no other than the Assembly.

The Elections of the Princes

At the opening of the sitting the Assembly was transformed into a vast reading-room. M. Jean Brunet, in the middle of the general preoccupation, interpellated the Government on the absence of deputies, whose election had been validated. M. Casimir-Périer, who was still Minister of Home Affairs, read a declaration in the terms of which the President of the Republic renounced, so far as he was concerned, the wish to take advantage of the promise made by the Princes, but he added that this pledge having been taken with the Assembly, it was the duty of the Assembly to pronounce in the last resort. Stormy debate.

On the Right and on the Left sharp personalities are exchanged. MM. Moulin, Batbie, and de Broglie

defend the Princes and support an order of the day from M. Desjardins thus drawn up :

Considering that the validation by the Assembly of the elections of the Oise, and Haute-Marne invests those elected by these Departments with the plenitude of their rights, the Assembly passes to the Order of the day.

On the other side, MM. Turquet, Pascal Dupret, Leblond and Duvergier de Hauranne support the Order of the day pure and simple, which was rejected.

Driven into coalition by circumstances, the Legitimists and the Republicans rejected the Order of the day moved by M. Desjardins on the question of priority by 352 votes to 284; and lastly by 646 votes to 2. The Assembly voted the following Order of the day proposed by M. Fresneau, a Legitimist :

The National Assembly considering that it has neither responsibility to assume, nor advice to give on pledges in which it has not participated passes to the Order of the day.

Like M. Thiers, the Assembly refused to lend itself to settling the question posed by the Princes. They ended by settling it for themselves. On the following day, the 19th of December, they were present at the sitting. Preceded by MM. Bocher and de Mornay, they made a modest entrance, not entirely devoid of embarrassment. Some deputies at most rose from curiosity. The Assembly quickly accustomed itself to the presence of the Princes, who sat, for that matter, in the simplest fashion in the world, side by side, in the Right Centre. This manifestation did not produce all the effect that had been reckoned upon. The Princes of Orleans were not made to play the part of a Louis Napoleon.

Displeasure of M. Thiers

On the other hand, it keenly irritated M. Thiers. He felt that he was compro-

mised if he did not take up a position clearly. He was accurately informed as to the tendencies of universal suffrage. A decisive evolution took place in him. He did not wish to favour dynastic pretensions, whatever they might be. In his *Souvenirs* he himself explains his state of mind with reference to the family which he had served: "I would have preferred this family to any other, if the Monarchy had seemed to me possible at this time. But the Republicans and the Legitimists forming together a great majority in the Assembly would have opposed it, and every attempt that I might have made in favour of this restoration would have been, on my part, not only a breach of loyalty towards Legitimists and Republicans, but also the violation of my duty to France, for it was my mission to give her peace by preventing party conflicts."[1] He went further; on the 26th of December, in the middle of the great speech which he delivered against the income tax, he burned his boats, and gave his formal adhesion to the Republic.

Demonstrating that the impost in question would spread the germs of discord in the country, he adds:

> And here, gentlemen, I speak, as always, with profound conviction; but believe me, you who wish to make a loyal trial of the Republic, and you are right (*murmurs on some benches, applause on others*), it must be made loyally. We must not be play-actors who would try a form of Government with the desire to bring it down. This trial must be made seriously, sincerely, and, as I see by your deliberate votes every day, we all wish it. (*Murmurs on the Right, hear! hear! and applause on the Left.*) No! Once again, we are not play-actors. We are honest men. We wish to make this trial loyally. (*Fresh murmurs from some benches on the Right.*)
>
> Gentlemen, I would like to unite you, and not divide you.

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 179.

(*Hear ! hear !*) Well ! I know that in speaking to you of loyalty, I do not divide you, on the contrary I unite you. (*Hear ! hear !*)

I address myself to those who wish this trial to succeed, and I am sure that in doing so, I address the whole Assembly ; but I address myself specially to those who make the Republic the object of their unceasing care,—and I am one of that number. (*Disturbance.*)

I ask them in the name of the secret wish, the deep wish of their hearts, to place justice everywhere, under the Republic. I entreat them not to act as the Absolute Power acted (*Hear ! hear !*) which was willing to flatter the People by giving it laws, which it afterwards used against it, when the People believed itself to be using them against others. (*Lively approval.*)

These words, pronounced with an accent of great sincerity and skilfully commanding gesture, made a deep impression upon the Assembly, and particularly upon the Right.

Fresh Tactics in favour of Fusion

The Monarchists admitted from that time that they could no longer count on M. Thiers to help them to restore the throne. He was already the declared adversary of the Empire and the Comte de Chambord. He had just separated himself from the Orleans Princes. The Republic, he had said so, remained in his eyes the sole resource. The Republic, with the support of a chief so experienced, one too who was himself the holder of power, was the probable and perhaps imminent solution. Counsel must at once be taken.

Then a solemn debate was seen to take form between the two fractions of the Royalist party, whose echoes only slowly reached the knowledge of the public, but which has since been known in all its details. We have mentioned the quite special position which was held, outside and beside of the Right of the Assembly, by a man, who had not thought that he was to figure there, but whom

most of its members looked upon as their chief, M. de Falloux. On the 3rd of January, 1872, he came to Versailles to the room of M. de Meaux, Deputy of the Loire, and there he held a kind of conference to which the Monarchists were invited. With a very remarkable mixture of frankness and circumspection, he spoke: "You cannot remain for long in a situation so false and so perilous as that in which you now are. . . . As for the solution, what is it to be? In my own opinion, in the opinion of all those who are assembled here, it can only be the Monarchy with the whole House of Bourbon reconciled and united. . . ."

And then frankly entering on the difficulty which prevented the fusion, he said: "The Comte de Chambord has declared for the white flag; the Princes of Orleans, if I am correctly informed, persist in believing that France would never give her consent to repudiating the tricolour, and that satisfaction would be given to all memories, and all our glories, if our ancient fleur-de-lys came and took their place upon the present flag."

And he put this question: "Can the Comte de Chambord reverse his own opinion?" and he replied that the Prince could do so before a tribunal, a supreme arbitrator, which was no other than the nation represented by the "National Assembly": "That most loyal, most honestly patriotic Assembly, in one word, the most capable of giving an equal guarantee to the people and the King."

This was to affirm in the presence of the sovereign authority of the King, the sovereign authority of the nation and the Assembly. The pure Legitimists did not conceal their amazement at first, nor their indignation later on.

With a persistency which, in such a company, was an error of judgment, M. de Falloux examined the transitional means, which might permit them to arrive at a restoration of the Monarchy, and he uttered this phrase: "It is here that the possible part of the Duc d'Aumale appears." He added: "The Duc d'Aumale is perhaps the furthest from us; meanwhile if he entered upon engagements on his word of honour, who would refuse to believe him?"[1] Immediately a murmur arose. One of the members cried out: "Do you propose to us the Presidency of the Republic in the hands of the Duc d'Aumale?" At this interruption M. de Falloux had to defend himself.

The conference became stormy, and it ended in the midst of confusion and mutual discontent. The supreme effort at reconciliation had failed. The next day, in Legitimist circles, nothing was talked of but the abortive attempt of M. de Falloux and of what the Marquis de Dreux Brézé called "a programme preparatory to the diminution of the King of France as sovereign."

These grave facts coinciding with the no less grave statements of M. Thiers, preceded by some days the bye-elections of January 7, 1872.

In the Department of the Seine the candidates were Victor Hugo, supported by the Radical party, and M. Vautrain, president of the Council General of the Seine and of the Municipal Council of Paris. M. Vautrain, a moderate Republican, was elected by 121,150 votes against 93,243 given to Victor Hugo.

[1] "Souvenirs du Vicomte de Meaux." *Correspondant*, numéro du 10 October, 1902, p. 7. See also Falloux, *Discours et Mélanges politiques*, t. ii. p. 319.

The election of M. Vautrain was a success for M. Thiers. It indicated the resumption of the normal life of Paris, and the strength of moderate opinions. "This name, M. Jules Favre had said in a letter addressed to the *Siècle*, means reconciliation of Paris with Versailles, return of the Assembly to Paris; amnesty."

The vote of Paris was to exercise a great influence upon the Republican propaganda in the Provinces.

In the Departments, out of sixteen elections, eleven were Republican, those of MM. Robert, Lambert, Jacques, Bouchet, Challemel-Lacour, Gaudy, Brillier, Laget, Dauphin, Cotte and Dérégnaucourt; four Monarchist: MM. Dupont, Grange, Charreyron and Chesnelong. The Pas-de-Calais sent M. Levert to the Nationalist Assembly, a Bonapartist, a former Prefect under the Empire.

On the whole manifestations of universal suffrage followed one another, all in favour of the Republic, and they were particularly agreeable to the President in the critical period through which he was passing.

He recalls the fact complacently in his *Souvenirs*: "The great majority of the middle classes, tradesmen, country folk, without declaring themselves expressly for the Republic, said, '*We are for the Government of M. Thiers.*' These words came to us from all sides." [1]

On the other hand, M. Thiers began to encounter in the Assembly resistance to which he was not accustomed. On a question of finance, the bill authorizing the Bank of France to increase its issue of notes by 400 millions, he was taken to task by

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 237.

M. Bocher, the friend and confidant of the Princes of Orleans, and by M. Buffet, who was soon to play a part of some importance. M. Thiers was somewhat astounded: "M. Bocher," he says, "a former prefect, shrewd, of agreeable personality, intelligent in business, speaking clearly, sometimes very well, had felt his ambition gradually growing. M. Buffet, a dry intelligence, reducing everything to formulas of political economy, speaking didactically, but hard-working, serious, accurate, with all the externals which capture assemblies. Both of them showed themselves in this debate as wanting in financial insight as they were ill-disposed to the Government."

The energetic pressure of M. Thiers, and the "rare talent" with which M. Henri Germain defended the proposal, were necessary to enable the Bank to receive at the last hour, on the 29th of December, an authority which spared the country the monetary and financial crisis which seemed imminent.

A still more serious incident soon placed M. Thiers face to face with the raging majority, and permitted him to measure the range of the evolution which had been brought about. It was again a question of finance, but on a subject which he had particularly at heart; the bill on the taxation of raw materials.

In the proposals bearing upon the remodelling of the system of taxation, necessary to meet the fresh demands, three currents were distinguishable.

Some recommended the increase of all the former taxes in a fixed proportion; this was a purely fiscal procedure, that of the additional centimes; others were inclined to borrow the income tax from England and America; this was the system of taxing

earnings. Others were guided above all by economical considerations; they demanded the restoration of duties, and especially of the duties upon raw materials.

Duties upon raw Materials

M. Thiers, in his message of the 7th December, 1871, had with his customary lucidity supported this last system, which from different points of view was that of his predilection.

He had at the same time opened a question no less serious, no less urgent, that of our economical relations with foreign countries. After having demonstrated how treaties concluded with the Powers since 1860 had caused France to pass, from the point of view of the customs, from the prohibitionist system to that of almost absolute liberty; after having recalled the blow dealt by the policy of free exchange to the most important national industries, such as the iron industry, that of all kinds of fabrics, agriculture, the merchant service; after having shown the failures which had followed the application of the Imperial policy in many of our provinces; after having recalled the fact that the Legislative Body, moved by these misfortunes, had ordered an inquiry into the commercial treaties, M. Thiers thus defined the policy which he proposed to follow:

> We intend, while leaving to trade all the freedom that is compatible with public prosperity, to secure for our industries, those industries which have been making the wealth of France for three-quarters of a century, the protection of tariffs sufficient to prevent them from expiring under the unrestricted competition of foreign countries; sufficiently stimulating to prevent them from falling asleep, not sufficient to force them to abandon production: such is the economical policy which we shall propose to you.

Placing himself thus at the economical and fiscal

points of view at the same time, M. Thiers was brought to demand from the Assembly the restoration of the revenue from customs, and the establishment of duties upon raw materials.

But this proposition was far from satisfying the majority of the Assembly. Although protectionist it was influenced by the very active procedures of the representatives of the business world, who found fault with the duty upon raw materials, as dealing a blow to the industries just at the moment when they were displaying an unexpected activity, and who demonstrated in a convincing fashion the difficulties of collection. On the other side M. Thiers did not mean to yield.

"When they have rejected all other taxation, he would say to his intimate friends, then they will have to come to the duties on raw materials."

In the end this resource and the income tax remained alone for consideration.

The Income Tax

The question of the income tax was discussed for six days in December 1871. The proposal came from men of indisputable competence: MM. Wolowski, Henri Germain, Léonce de Lavergne. They pressed the advantages of a tax against which, they said, a strong prejudice exists in France, but which is imposed in England, the United States, Prussia, Austria, Switzerland, Italy; a just tax, for it makes all citizens contribute in proportion to their resources; a tax in harmony with sound economical principles, as it takes the place of other taxes, whose least objectionable feature is that of overcharging either the poorer classes or the productive classes, and in that case, national industry.

The authors of this proposal recognized, furthermore, that the collection of this tax would offer

real difficulties; but they prided themselves on having met this objection by their system of schedules. Meanwhile in the case of one of the schedules, that which touched incomes derived from commerce and the professions, they were obliged to have recourse to the system of declaration and assessment.

In the sitting of the 26th of December M. Thiers opposed the income tax in very lively fashion. He attacked it on two sides; "this tax does double duty in attacking incomes which are already heavily burdened; and then this tax is entirely arbitrary."

M. Thiers defended with much eloquence the fiscal work of the Revolution, "which made far the most equitable distribution of taxes that exists in any European society." He showed that the income tax, applicable in England, could not be established in France, where all sources of revenue are already subject to the four contributions. M. Thiers asked if it was possible to depend upon so speculative a resource to balance the Budget. He further asked himself if it was possible in a country so frequently upset by revolutions to establish a tax leaving so much room for the arbitrary action of the taxing authorities, and exposing the various parties to the temptation of placing the burden inequitably upon one another.

He epitomized his whole argument in this sentence of the genuine lapidary style: "We have a fiscal system, ingenious, scientific, perfectly constructed, which supplies the means of charging all sources of revenue, and which can be still further improved; do not let us spoil it by bringing into it an institution which would confuse its whole economy, which would strike twice over, and whose application would be often unjust and sometimes even dangerous to the

security of the tax-payers." The speech of M. Thiers produced a great effect upon the Assembly. "The marks of approbation were very lively," he observes; "it was clearly felt at that time that I was the real Conservative."

However, as soon as the political question came up, these favourable impressions were dispersed.

It was in the course of this debate that M. Thiers irritated the Right of the National Assembly so violently by uttering the words for which it was never to forgive him, "the loyal experiment of the Republic," and that he declared himself to be "among the number of those who make the Republic the object of their unceasing care." On the main question M. Thiers had his own way, and the income tax was rejected.

Debate on the Duties on raw Materials

There remained then only the duties upon raw materials. The debate upon the subject, begun on the 10th of January, 1872, fanned the flame of party feelings even more. This time the Assembly had to choose finally between free trade and protection. The debate lasted nine days, the agitation spread outside the Assembly. While the Chamber of Commerce declared against the proposed duties, the agricultural centres, on the other hand, gave their adherence to them for the most part.

As an eventual resource the free-trade party opposed to the duties on raw materials a tax upon personal property. M. Thiers intervened with two long speeches on the 13th and 18th of January; but the solution was not reached. Tempers had become heated, the Assembly was nervously excited. To bring the matter to an end, M. Barthe brought forward an order of the day of a conciliatory

nature, which satisfied M. Thiers by permitting taxation upon raw materials, and was by way of pleasing the opposite party by diminishing the importance of this measure as much as possible.

This order of the day was on the point of being adopted, when up came a new proposal. M. Lucien Brun, speaking in the name of the Representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, advised them to find the 180 millions indispensable to the Budget in a tax upon the amount of business transactions. He demanded the nomination, before any decision, of a commission of fifteen members empowered to study the proposal.

M. Thiers resisted this idea in a most keen speech, and declared that the Government, in accepting M. Barthe's Order of the day had reached the limit of possible concessions. He declared that he could not lend himself to delays, which would leave the Budget unbalanced.

He put the question of confidence plainly, adding that "the resistance of the National Assembly to the tax upon raw materials was only due to some interests losing all sense of shame in their desire for satisfaction."

At this point M. Feray, a political friend of M. Thiers, but very much excited on the economical question "to the degree of not being recognizable as such," proposed a resolution to which M. Lucien Brun gave his adhesion :

> The National Assembly, reserving the principle of a tax upon raw materials, decides that a commission of fifteen members shall examine the proposed tariffs and the questions raised by this tax, to which it will only have recourse in the event that it proves impossible to balance the Budget in any other way.

In spite of the determined opposition of the Presi-

dent of the Republic, who displayed his indignation "at the impudence of the coalition of interests" somewhat noisily, this resolution was adopted by 367 to 297. The Deputies had divided on unusual lines, separated into partisans of free trade and protection; nearly all the Republicans who usually supported M. Thiers found themselves in opposition to him, while those who were ordinarily his adversaries, the Monarchists, had voted for him.

Resignation of M. Thiers

The Government was placed in a minority; on the same evening the Ministers signed their resignation. The President of the Republic sent in his own on the next day by the following letter addressed to M. Jules Grévy, President of the Assembly:

MR. PRESIDENT,—

I beg you to be so good as to transmit to the National Assembly my resignation as President of the Republic.

There is no need for me to add that until I am replaced I shall watch over all the business of the State with my accustomed zeal. Meanwhile the National Assembly will, I hope, understand that the vacancy in authority should be prolonged as little as possible.

The Ministers have also sent me in their resignations, and I have been obliged to accept them.

They, like myself, will continue to carry on business with the closest application until the appointment of their successors.

Accept, sir, the assurance of my high consideration.

THIERS.

Versailles, *the 20th of January*, 1872.

The decision of M. Thiers, made known on the evening of the 19th of January, caused great emotion in the parliamentary world. Numerous steps were at once taken to induce him to reconsider his decision; the Left, even the Right, sent deputations to his official residence. Marshal MacMahon, speaking in the name of the army and its chiefs,

joined his entreaties to those of the Deputies.

Certain Monarchists hoped to find in this incident the opportunity for arriving at their ends, and they already thought of bringing forward a princely candidate.

The morning of the 20th was consecrated to the meeting of the different fractions of the Assembly. On all sides a solution of the crisis was sought, and Orders of the day were drawn up. A conference took place between the Committee of the Right Centre and the Committee of the Legitimist Reunion "des Réservoirs." Here was arranged the plan of campaign whose execution was entrusted to an Orleanist deputy, M. Batbie. After the President of the Assembly had formally read the letter of resignation of M. Thiers, M. Batbie went to the Tribune and demanded that the Assembly should immediately withdraw into its Committees to nominate a Commission which, by way of preparing a conciliation, should obtain from the President of the Republic the withdrawal of his resignation.

Delay in deliberation was equivalent to an acceptance.

M. Deseilligny, in the name of the Left Centre, proposed to vote an Order of the day immediately, expressing confidence in the President of the Republic and his Ministers, and refusing to accept their resignation. It was now the turn of the Right to feel embarrassed; it perhaps wished for the crisis, but it did not wish to bear the responsibility for the resignation of M. Thiers.

M. Batbie covered the retreat of the Monarchists by proposing the following Order of the day:

Considering that the Assembly in its resolution of yesterday limited itself to reserving an economical question, that its

vote cannot be in any way regarded as an act expressing want of confidence or hostility, and cannot involve the withdrawal of the support which it has always given to the Government, the Assembly makes a fresh appeal to the patriotism of the President of the Republic, and refuses to accept his resignation.

The House went to the Division in the midst of the liveliest agitation. The Order of the day was carried unanimously, eight not voting.

The sitting was immediately suspended, and the Assembly ordered its Executive to convey its resolution to the President of the Republic. Nearly two hundred deputies, belonging for the most part to the Left and the Left Centre, betook themselves on foot to the Hôtel de la Préfecture. At the end of half an hour the Delegates returned to the Chamber. M. Benoist d'Azy, Vice-President, reported on their mission. On his entreaties and those of the Deputies present M. Thiers, after having officially recognized the Order of the day, had replied :

I am very weary, and I fear that similar difficulties will occur afresh.

However, I cannot resist the vote of the Assembly. I am touched by this proceeding, and I am very willing to try again to devote myself to the interests of the country according to the measure of my strength.

It is not in a spirit of pedantry that I have supported this tax upon raw materials; only if I have definite ideas upon certain questions, the reason is that I hold the conviction that they are just.

M. Benoist d'Azy added that the "testimony of the confidence of the Assembly applied equally to the Cabinet such as it had been constituted before the incident."

The crisis then was conjured away. But it served as a warning to M. Thiers. It indicated for the first time the absence of sympathy between him and the

majority of the Assembly. It was the first act of a long succession of events which were to prolong the period of doubt and instability in France.

III

Attempt at a parliamentary Fusion

The repetitions of a crisis irritated the majority keenly. Not only had it lost confidence in M. Thiers, but he was becoming an object of its detestation. If the King failed the Parliamentarians they proposed to manage their business by themselves. The new conception seems to have been the following: the fall of M. Thiers, proclamation of a vacancy in the Executive Power, the post of Lieutenant-General confided to the Duc d'Aumale.

But to arrive at this result there was needed; if not a united Monarchy, at least a united Right. They contented themselves with the "Parliamentary fusion." But that was still to make. Even when reduced to these terms the agreement could only be arrived at by the adhesion of the Comte de Chambord, since on the extreme Right nothing was done except by his orders.

Thus they found themselves always face to face with the same difficulty. Everything depended on the will of the Comte de Chambord. This time M. Ducrot made himself the champion of the combination.

The Comte de Chambord at Antwerp

Towards the end of January the General went to Antwerp, where the Comte de Chambord had just arrived, and was staying at the Hôtel Saint-Antoine. Already on several occasions the pretender had in 1871 approached the French frontier, and each time at Geneva, as at

Lucerne, deputations had come to express their vows in favour of his accession.

General Ducrot submitted then to the Comte de Chambord the programme of the practical measures necessary to end in the restoration. He sounded him on the nomination of the Duc d'Aumale to the place of M. Thiers, by way of transition, and begged him to reconsider his manifesto of the 5th of July, of 1871, settling the question of the flag. It has been said that the General dragged himself to the knees of the Comte de Chambord without bending his will.[1]

On the question concerning the Presidency of the Duc d'Aumale the mistrust of the Comte de Chambord took the alarm; he replied with some coldness:

"I do not admit that a prince of the blood can be outside the circle of his King."

This isolated departure of General Ducrot was for a long time kept secret.

At the same time efforts were made in the lobbies of the Assembly to prepare a solution in case a fresh presidential crisis should declare itself.

A Programme drawn up

It was thought that the best means of securing the Parliamentary fusion was to draw up a working programme which should obtain the adhesion of the extreme Right, of the politicians of the Right pure and simple, and even, if success could be attained, of the Liberals of the Right Centre. These different supports once obtained, efforts would be made to secure the sanction of the Comte de Chambord.

It was thought that if the "conditions" were respectfully presented to the representative of the

[1] Ernest Daudet, *Le Duc d'Aumale*, p. 262.

Legitimate Dynasty by the deputies upon whom the vote of restoration depended, he would accept them with less difficulty than if they emanated from the dissident branch of the House of France, and that perhaps he would not withhold from the majority what he withheld from his cousins.

The moderate Legitimist Deputies at the head of whom were MM. Baragnon, Ernoul, Desseyre, de Meaux, and de Cumont, undertook the enterprise. The negotiations were conducted with great activity. Agreement was on the point of being reached.

Union was going to be declared among all the Royalist Deputies. The Comte de Paris, yielding this time to the solicitations of his uncle, the Duc de Nemours, declared himself ready to start for Antwerp.

Naturally, the Comte de Chambord was informed of these negotiations by his agents at Versailles. He judged it necessary to define the situation before any further advance was made. He had a lively remembrance of the commentaries which were embroidered on his manifesto of the 5th of July, 1871; an anonymous note published by certain Legitimists in consequence of that manifesto had attributed to him the intention of abdicating. Above all he claimed to oppose any candidature on the part of his cousins for the exercise of power. What he wished to do in spite of all solicitations was to affirm his principles afresh, and the full and entire conception that he had formed of the "rights of the King."

Fresh Declaration of the Comte de Chambord

On the 25th of Janüary, 1872, he published a new manifesto: a protest against the persistent efforts which aimed at destroying the nature of his words, his sentiments, and his acts.

"I will never abdicate," he declared in reply to the famous note, in which the sincerity of the Comte de Chambord was spoken of, which went so far as "sacrifice," this word implying abdication in the sense in which it was understood.[1]

Then he protests with vehemence against the "sterile combinations," thereby making a clear allusion to the presidential candidature of the Duc d'Aumale. And he further says, with a reference to the princes of Orleans: "I will not allow, after having preserved it intact for forty years, any infringement to be made on the monarchical principle, the heritage of France, the last hope of her greatness and of her liberties."

He insists upon the "national principle of hereditary monarchy without which he is nothing, with which he can do everything, and after having affirmed afresh his attachment to the white flag, he ends with this phrase, which saps at the foundations the whole parliamentary edifice under construction: "Nothing will shake my resolve, nothing will tire my patience, and nobody under any pretext will obtain from me my consent to becoming *the Legitimate King of the Revolution.*"

The blow repeated with such persistence seemed decisive: it seemed that there was nothing further to be done this time but to bid farewell to Royalist enterprises, since the Comte de Paris on his side had categorically declared that he would not be a competitor for the throne of France against the Comte de Chambord.

But such was the wish of the Right to profit by the exceptional situation which it held in the

[1] Comte de Falloux, *Mémoires*, t. ii. p. 485.

National Assembly, that the Moderate Legitimist party continued its negotiations.

On the 17th of February, 1872, they succeeded in drawing up a programme. Here are the essential items:

Programme of the Rights

We consider Monarchy the natural government of our country, said this document, and by monarchy we understand the traditional and hereditary Monarchy.

A Monarchy, hereditary, representative, constitutional, secures to the country its right of intervention in the conduct of its affairs, and under the guarantee of ministerial responsibility all essential liberties: political, civil, religious, liberties; equality before the law; free access of all to all employments, all honours, all serious advantages; the peaceful and continuous improvement of the condition of the working classes.

This is the Monarchy that we wish for.

Furthermore, respecting our country, as much as we love her, we expect nothing except from the vote of the nation freely expressed by its representatives.

This programme, drawn up by four Legitimists, MM. Baragnon, Ernoul, de Cumont, and de Meaux, contained a scientifically compounded dose of Orleanist and Legitimist principles. It indicated, further, the practical means of the Restoration: a vote of the National Assembly.

As soon as it was known, it collected eighty signatures. The extreme Right refused its adhesion straight off; it declared that there was a want of respect to the Comte de Chambord in drawing up a programme, and in affirming the sovereign power of the nation and of the country.

Meanwhile all precautions had been taken not to ruffle the susceptibilities of the Prince. It had been decided that "the programme should be sent as an act of homage and fidelity, absolutely as the

act of certain deputies, who, making a profession of faith to their constituents, did not intend to compromise the King by asking for any kind of answer from him. In fine, it was a respectful communication: it was neither a piece of advice nor a summons." [1]

The Comte de Chambord immediately received news of the programme of the Right, and was informed that MM. Ernoul and Baragnon had been charged to remit it to him on the following day. In the course of the night which preceded their departure an envoy from the Prince informed the two mandatories of the Assembly that the Pretender could not receive their communication. Meanwhile he pronounced no word of disavowal. This silence carried with it the adhesion of the deputies of the extreme Right.

MM. Ernoul and Baragnon set off for Antwerp, where they were received on the 18th of February, 1872, by the Comte de Chambord.

The Comte de Chambord is dumb

They gave up the presentation of the programme of the Right, and confined themselves to discoursing to him of the situation of the Assembly. The Pretender listened to them without indicating his opinions. M. Ernoul was pressing; "it was during this audience that M. Ernoul, trying by means of a comparison to overcome, on the subject of the eventual acceptation of the three colours, the intelligible but over-accentuated repugnance of the Comte de Chambord, was not afraid to tell him that if, to redeem the original sin, the Son of God

[1] Letter of M. Baragnon, dated Feb. 18, 1872, *Correspondant* of the 10th October, 1901.

Himself had been obliged to clothe Himself with the cruellest miseries of our fallen humanity, the King of France apparently might without derogation take inspiration from the Divine Example, and, identifying himself with the condition of the country which would return to him, might consent at need to fight along with his faithful subjects the revolutionary spirit under the standard placed between his hands by France in her enlightenment. No answer was made to him; and without wavering in his sturdy Royalist faith, M. Ernoul returned anxious, almost sad, to Versailles."[1] Each side made capital out of this dumbness. It ought to have been understood that the silence of Kings, like the silence of peoples, is a lesson.

The ambiguity of the situation had its usual effect. The adhesions, which had been counted upon, were in default. At the first moment the party had flattered themselves in the hope of uniting three hundred signatures. Only 159 were counted.[2] The Right Centre, instead of giving its approval pure and simple, expressed some reservations.

"We wish, like yourselves, to remind the country of the services which it has already received and to which it can still look forward, from the constitutional Monarchy, whose essential foundations you so clearly indicate in the endeavour to reconcile ancient France with modern France." And the Right Centre further proclaimed its "loyalty to the tricolour."

In fine, the attempt at parliamentary fusion came to nothing. They abstained even from

[1] Merveilleux-Duvigneau, *Un peu d'histoire*, p. 65.

[2] Marquis de Dampierre, *Cinq années de vie politique*, p. 78.

publishing the programme of the Right, and the declaration of the Right Centre. These two documents were not delivered to publicity till eighteen months later, after the letter of the Comte de Chambord, dated from Salzburg, which was to deal the last blow to monarchical hopes.

The Right then remained divided. Some days after the journey of MM. Ernoul and Baragnon manifestations took place in front of the Hôtel Saint-Antoine, and the Comte de Chambord was obliged to leave Antwerp. It was not necessary that he should remain any longer in proximity to the frontiers of France.

The attempt at a monarchical restoration was, then, indefinitely adjourned. Two systems alone remained henceforth in evidence: the Republic and the Empire. M. Thiers understood this.

After having left to M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, Secretary-General to the President, the task of affirming in a public letter, dated the 28th of February, 1872, and addressed to M. Varrox, Deputy and President of the Council-General of the Meuse, that it was necessary to organize the Republic without any delay, he opened the struggle against the Bonapartist party, which, profiting by the confusion of the Monarchists, was resuming the offensive with vigour for the conquest of power.

Re-awakening of the Bonapartists

On the 11th of February, 1872, three bye-elections had taken place. Republicans were elected in the Departments of Côtes-du-Nord and the Eure. The man who was called the Vice-Emperor, M. Rouher, was elected in Corsica.

During the Parliamentary vacation, M. Rouher, who had left France since the 4th of September, had

returned to Paris, not without mystery. He did not at first stay in his own house in the Rue d'Élysée, but in an hotel; he made appointments in the houses of third persons. His procedures having been traced, he installed himself openly and took publicly the title of " Liquidator of the Civil List of Napoleon III." [1]

He organized immediately Bonapartist propaganda of the most active nature throughout France. Pamphlets were shed abroad in profusion, and notably the one of M. Peyron entitled, " They lied about it," whose aim was to demonstrate that the misfortunes of France were not due to the Empire, but to the Government of the 4th of September.

The stalwarts of the party had collected for this campaign a fairly large sum, which was employed in launching upon the country districts a veritable cloud of agents, going from public-house to public-house to affirm that the best means of freeing the territory was to recall Napoleon III. One hundred thousand francs were employed, it is said, in founding, under the management of M. Clément Duvernois, a former Minister of the Empire, the *Ordre*, a newspaper which was to instruct the middle classes in the faith. The *Petit Caporal* was also launched, which was addressed to the masses, the *Armée*, which exercised its activity in the barracks. The *Gaulois*, which rallied to the Imperial policy, directed its efforts to the world of the schools.

Lastly, the Bonapartists adopted as the place of their daily meetings the *Café de la Paix*, so that the part of the boulevard which forms the corner of

[1] Jules Richard, *Le Bonapartisme sous la République*, 1883, p. 31. See also *Journal de Fidus* (Eugène Loudun), t. iii. *L'Essai loyal*, p. 41.

the Grand-Hôtel and the Place de l'Opéra was wittily called the "Boulevard of the Isle of Elba."

Simultaneously the party organized its manifestations: funeral masses at Saint-Augustin, tumultuous concourses near the Saint-Lazare station on the arrival of the parliamentary trains; mobilization of the party at the funeral of M. Conti; a former private secretary of the Emperor.

Bonapartism and the Church

Personages as important as Cardinal de Bonnechose employed themselves openly in the Bonapartist propaganda.[1] Some endeavoured to bring about an understanding between the Catholic party and the Empire. Napoleon III; on being consulted, lent himself to the combination; he advised that the *Univers* should be coaxed. He added that his convictions had been for a long time firmly established: no concessions to the Revolution. He said "that he had been weak, but that he was religious by education and in principles." At the same time Prince Napoleon courted the Freethinkers and dined with M. Renan.

It was observed that Marshal MacMahon, in his deposition before the Committee of Inquiry upon the acts of the Government of the 4th of September, had, in connexion with the capitulation of Sedan, taken special care to defend Napoleon III.

Even at the Academy there were manifestations. On the 9th of November, 1871, the reception of M. Jules Janin had taken place. Several persons displayed bouquets of violets in their button-holes. M. Camille Doucet, who replied to the new member, made a panegyric upon the Emperor, which pro-

[1] *Journal de Fidus*, t. iii: p. 48.

voked a very lively and exceptional tumult under the dome of the Institute. It is true that less than two months afterwards, on the 30th of December, 1871, the French Academy made M. Littré successor to M. Villemain.

Access to the tribune of the Assembly was still wanting to the Bonapartist party. On the 16th of August, 1871, M. Severin Abbatucci had sent in his resignation as deputy of Corsica in order to permit the election of M. Rouher. The electoral campaign in Corsica was very keen, and the Government was able to note that functionaries of every rank supported the candidature of the former Minister of the Empire with ardour.

In the month of January, 1872, Napoleon III had been able to say at Chislehurst, "I know that I am the solution."

M. Thiers thought that he must keep his eyes open in this direction. A restoration of the Empire would have been, for him, the worst of solutions.

It is not that he allowed himself to be intimidated by the bragging of the Press of the party: "Do not attach any importance to the utterances of the Bonapartists," he wrote on the 12th of February, 1872. "They talk, having neither occupation nor money." Meanwhile, as he did not neglect small means, he undertook to damage the Imperial administration by directing a process against M. Janvier de la Motte, who was reckoned among the most vigorous, but also most fantastic prefects of Napoleon III. This action, which was conducted at Rouen, revealed singular administrative practices, but it indirectly brought on the fall of one of the best collaborators of M. Thiers. M. Pouyer-Quer-

tier, called to give evidence, supported the theory of fictitious cheques and irregular transfers in the matter of Departmental account-keeping. M. Thiers no longer had full confidence in him. The President wrote on the subject of this resignation to M. de Gontaut-Biron to inform Berlin. where M. Pouyer-Quertier was a *persona grata*: "I have seen poor Pouyer-Quertier hit by a shell which had escaped from his own hand. He wanted to support Janvier . . . and represented revolting rascalities as mere peccadilloes. He raised a storm of indignation. The Cabinet asked me to choose between it as a whole and the Minister of Finance. Prince Bismarck had taken a liking to M. Pouyer-Quertier, but perhaps he liked his defects as much as, and more than, his good qualities. However, the credit of France did not depend upon him, and it will be seen when we have to resume our payments." [1] M. Pouyer-Quertier sent in his resignation, and was replaced in the Ministry of Finance by M. Goulard, a member of the Right.

The condemnation of M. Janvier de la Motte was only an interlude. In the beginning of February, 1872, the rumour of an approaching Imperial restoration was persistently current, above all, abroad. It was to be accomplished in agreement with Germany. The story was circulated, propagated notably by the Prince of Orange, that by the terms of the agreement which was said to have taken place, Germany was to restore Alsace and Lorraine to Napoleon III, and take in compensation Belgium and Holland.[2]

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. i. p. 208.
[2] Osmont, *Reliques et Impressions*, p. 75.

Bonapartism and Germany

It certainly appears that negotiations were entered upon with the German Government. The statements of Count von Arnim and Prince Bismarck in documents of an official character, and intended to remain secret, scarcely permit a doubt. M. Thiers, who probably possessed knowledge of these negotiations, lost patience. On the 16th of February, 1872, he showed in the presence of several deputies in the lobbies of the National Assembly an intention of proceeding with vigour against the Bonapartist agitators.

The Assembly too, which had itself proclaimed the fall of the Empire with unanimity at Bordeaux, felt its hatred to this form of government evaporating. Thus it happened that M. Joyon having, proposed a vote that on the notices and demands for the direct contributions these words should be printed, "Taxes resulting from the War with Prussia," the motion was only adopted by a feeble majority.

At the sitting of the 21st of February, 1872, the Minister of Home Affairs, M. Victor Lefranc, realizing the menacing attitude of M. Thiers, brought forward a Bill destined to ensure the security of the Assembly and Government.

But the Bill, which aimed at the Bonapartists, might equally well have involved the Monarchists, since it threatened all those who should have undertaken to overturn the Republic.

Consternation on the benches of the Assembly. The Government demanded urgency. Urgency was going to be refused. Here was the crisis, a crisis which could only be favourable to the Empire, on the morrow of the check of the Antwerp interview.

M. Baragnon, who knew better than anybody how

far the Right was incapable at that moment of taking up the succession to M. Thiers, went to the tribune, after having made some reservations as to the intentions by which the Government had been inspired, he adjured his friends to pronounce in favour of urgency. Urgency was voted. For three months the Bill, which was called the "Lefranc law," kept up a lively agitation in the lobbies at Versailles. It was merely an engine of war. In the end the Lefranc Bill never saw the day of a public debate arrive.

On his arrival in the National Assembly M. Rouher at once created the "Group of the Appeal to the people." Thus Bonapartism, reconstituted as a party in opposition, was ready with all its organic features: it only waited for the arrival of an order from London.

As if he did not wish the grievances of the Right against M. Thiers to be lost, M. de Guiraud defined them clearly on the 9th of March, 1872, in the course of an interpellation, announced with a great deal of noise, on the resignation of M. Pouyer-Quertier. In the speech of M. de Guiraud there was no kind of question of the doctrines upheld by M. Pouyer-Quertier before the Court of Assizes at Rouen. The Deputy of the Aude attacked the Government: "The Government," he said, "goes one way, the Assembly the other"; and he complained that M. Thiers gave fresh chances to the Republic day by day, not without admitting, with a touching simplicity, that he had rendered the Monarchy "impossible." M. de Guiraud would wish the President of the Republic to form a homogeneous Ministry taken from the bosom of the majority, and that he should govern in complete agreement with that majority.

"Thus you will have," he said to M. Thiers, "a majority of three hundred."

M. Thiers replied to this advice with spirit and pertinency: "I am reproached with not governing in accordance with the wishes of the majority. I look for that majority, and I find a conspiracy."

Put on his trial in person, M. Pouyer-Quertier defended himself, justified his administration, and endeavoured to rally the sympathies of the Assembly by committing himself to violent attacks upon the Delegation of Tours and Bordeaux. He made use of an unfortunate phrase, which brought M. Gambetta to the Tribune: "France has paid," he said, "all the debts contracted in her name, whether honourably or otherwise." After an intervention on the part of M. Dufaure, Keeper of the Seals, the Assembly proclaimed the immorality of the financial theories of the Empire.

Two days afterwards, on the 13th of March, 1872, the Assembly passed a law against the International Association of Workers. The question occasioned exchanges of opinion between the Chancelleries. M. Jules Favre had taken it seriously. M. Dufaure proposed the Bill, which was passed by the Assembly; its drafting seemed to be generally defective.

At last the National Assembly, before closing the Session, voted the budget of 1872. It separated on the 27th of March to remain in vacation to the 22nd of April. The general aspect of the Session had been tumultuous, confused. The situation remained more obscure than ever. From the political point of view all the parties were compromised at once. The Government of M. Thiers was visibly shaken. Within and without disagreeable rumours began to gain currency on the subject of its stability.

IV

In the interval between the two Sessions (March 31st to April 22nd) the movement of public opinion strengthened in a sense favourable to Republican institutions. A great number of Councils-General meeting during the vacation sent addresses to the President of the Republic, in which they bore witness to their confidence in his enlightenment, his patriotism, thanking him for the part which he had taken in the negotiations with Germany, and *for the care which he was giving to the preservation of the form of the established Government.* These addresses multiplied, and by their number and firmness assumed the character of a veritable manifesto.

At Paris the action brought by General Trochu against the *Figaro* opened the first public discussion upon the responsibilities of the war. The Empire was attacked with great vigour by Maître Allou; it was defended by Maître Grandperret. General Trochu himself spoke; and, as ever, he spoke much, and he spoke well.

The journalist who had attacked him was condemned to a penalty which seemed light.

M. Thiers reports maliciously that he expressed himself in this sense to Marshal MacMahon. The Marshal, according to him, replied: "Believe me, Mr. President, this arrest is good for the army; it is a lesson to it. It is necessary that it should know that one cannot be the Emperor's general in the morning, and general of the Republic in the evening of the same day."[1]

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 267.

Rhetorical Campaign of M. Gambetta

In the provinces M. Gambetta began his "oratorical rounds" which were to serve the Republican propaganda so strongly. This political procedure had been adopted after ripe reflection in the political group to which Gambetta belonged. Spuller wrote to him on the 9th of May, 1871: "I will remind you that we have often talked at other times of campaigns in the principal towns. These campaigns seem to me more than ever necessary. Until the Republic is at last proclaimed and settled, your part appears to me to be that of a Republican O'Connell. We will go from town to town, sowing the word of democracy at the banquets, the improvised meetings: it must be done at any cost." [1] In this first phase of his action Gambetta had only one thought: to reassure the country, to give it confidence in the stability of the Republican system, and in the wisdom of the party which recognized him as its chief; at the same time he gave definiteness to the campaign for aiming at a dissolution, and energetically denied to the Assembly the right of proclaiming itself Sovereign. At Angers, on the 7th of April, he said: "They have come to light, have the stratagems of our adversaries, which consist in representing one part of France as foreign to the other part, in opposing these men to those, the north to the south. No! Everywhere the same spirit is present, everywhere homogeneous, and everywhere similar to itself, animating, inspiriting, and uniting all parts of France, and in the name of Republican interests I hail *the moral unity of our country*." This, in opposition to adversaries who affected to distinguish between

[1] *Lettres* de Spuller à Gambetta, *Revue de Paris*, June 7, 1900.

Paris and the Provinces, was a very clever resumption of the thesis of the indivisibility of the Republic. He sang the praises of M. Thiers: "There is a thing finer than to have written the annals of the French Revolution, it is to complete it, crowning one's work with the loyalty, the sincerity of one's Government."

At Havre, on the 18th of April, 1872, he said, "They call me the commercial traveller. Well! yes, I am a traveller, and I am the commercial of the Democracy. That is my commission. I hold it from the people. . . . If I believe my country to be lost, outside the Republic, I certainly must say so! It is my mission; I fulfil it, come what may!" He further said: "Let us limit our demands to that; do not let us deny the poverty, the sufferings, the pains of part of the democracy. . . . But let us beware of Utopias. . . . There is no social remedy, because there is *no one social question.* There is a series of problems awaiting solution. . . . France will never separate herself from you, Republicans, because France has never asked her Government for any but two things: *order* and *liberty.* . . ." He approached the subject of Education in these terms: "This education, it must be absolutely civil; that is the character of the State. And let there be no cry of persecution! The State will leave the churches the greatest liberty, and our adversaries will be the first to recognize it. The State can have no competence, no sphere of action in reference to dogmas or philosophical doctrines; it must ignore these things, or it must become arbitrary, persecuting, intolerant, and it cannot, it has not the right to, become this." Demanding military service equally for all, the orator pro-

nounces this other formula : " Every citizen *a soldier* and *trained*."

He thus draws out the main lines of a Government programme. But he adds that everything must rest on a new constitutional system, and he denies to the Assembly the right to found this system. " In the first rank of reforms, says he, you know that I place the election of a Republican Assembly. . . . I expect nothing from the Assembly at Versailles. . . . Dissolution, that is the first reform which we must go for. . . ."

M. Thiers let himself be carried by the stream ; he took the first step in the direction of a reconciliation with Paris. Escaping, in a sense, from the superintendence of the permanent Committee, he gave a great reception at the Elysée. The crowd of guests pressed into the apartments of the Chief of the State, open for the first time since the war. Would the Republic take the form and figure of a Government ?

CHAPTER VIII

THE APOGEE

The Opening of the Session—Interpellations—Debate on the War Contracts—Inquiry upon the Capitulations; Marshal Bazaine sent before a Council of War—Negotiations for Payment of Three last Milliards of Indemnity—Discussion and Vote on the Army Bill, July 27, 1872—Convention of June 29—Budget of 1873; fresh Taxes—The Three Milliard Loan—Parliamentary Situation; left Centre adheres to the Republic; Attempt at "Conjunction of the Centres"; the Council of Nine; Manifestation of the "Bonnets à Poil"—The Holidays: M. Thiers at Trouville; oratorical Campaign of Gambetta—Situation of Alsace-Lorraine—Agitation of Parties; Expulsion of Prince Napoleon; the Comte de Chambord and the Orleans Princes—Religious Manifestations—Elections of October 26, 1872.

I

Session of April 1872

The Chamber reassembled on the 22nd of April, 1872. The Session was to last till the 3rd of August of the same year. This is the high-water mark of the Government of M. Thiers.

During fifteen months since the first sittings when the National Assembly meeting at Bordeaux entrusted M. Thiers with the mission of saving and restoring the country, a first cycle of events had been accomplished. The Peace had been wrangled over and signed, the last convulsions of the crisis had been suppressed, a Government had been inaugurated, the Administration had been got to work, France

had recovered the sense of her existence and her resources, she had had her first experience of liberty.

M. Thiers had said at Bordeaux: "To pacify, reorganize, raise credit, revive work, that is the only policy possible and even conceivable at this moment."

The task thus limited was in part accomplished. M. Thiers had also foreseen from the first the difficulties which were to hamper his work, and the necessities which were to hurry it or perhaps interrupt it. He further said: "When this work of restoration is completed, and it cannot be very long, then will the time have arrived for discussing, for weighing, theories of Government." The work of restoration was not yet completed, but already the hour of the "theories of Government" had struck, so necessary to men are politics!

The taste for authority is inherent in human nature, no less than that for obedience. The struggle for power is the first act of social activity. Men begin by quarrelling; by dissension they arrive at union. It might in truth be said that their first love is to hate one another.

The Republic was founded in the midst of the chaos of parliamentary struggles. But the natural evolution of the crisis still imposed burdens, which the Republic alone, as had been seen, was able to take up. The monarchical parties had hesitated; in the presence of such heavy tasks as the conclusion of peace, the suppression of the insurrection, the creation of fresh taxes, that peculiar condition of Republican anonymity was required, or rather it was necessary that, by favour of this formula, the responsibility should be spread and diffused over the whole nation, in order that the

nation should bow before the consequences of its errors and accept the whole burden.

Now, circumstances were such at the period to which we have come, that in spite of the vehement ambition of parties and the restlessness of their aspirations, the Republican form was still imposed upon them. They detested it; they were the masters, and they could not reject it. The past was still too near; M. Thiers had already said this in by no means measured terms.

"Wait eight days. . . ." But these eight days never seem near completion.

The enemy still occupies the national territory; the war indemnity is not all paid; the great financial and military Bills are not yet passed. And then the conduct of the past awaits liquidation, the definition of responsibilities, those for the war, those for the Commune. Formidable clouds are still gathering overhead; they must break in order that feelings may be appeased and the atmosphere cleared.

Thus this session is to spend its sittings upon the triple necessity which is so pressing: completion of the liquidation, work of re-organization, struggle for the constitution. The past and the future are in active collision under the eyes of the busy, wise old man, who labours to prepare the issues and deaden the shocks.

At the outset a kind of warning indicated to the Assembly how precious this life still was to the country. M. Thiers had appeared at the sitting on the day of re-opening; the following day he was said to be seriously ill. Immediately the alarm spread, stocks went down, anxiety as to the future of France was universal. Happily the indisposition was only of a temporary nature. M.

Thiers was soon more alert, and more nimble than ever. He signed on the 23rd of April the decree by which M. de Goulard, Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, was definitely appointed Minister of Finance in place of M. Pouyer-Quertier, M. Teisserenc de Bort, of the Right Centre, replacing him at the Ministry of Commerce.

Opening of the Session

This work of repair passed almost unnoticed, and the attention of the Assembly was already absorbed by the skirmishes of the opening of the Session; an interpellation of General Ducrot on the appointment of the Mayor of Châteauroux; another pointing to the addresses sent in by the General Councils; another attacking the foreign policy of the Government; another drawing attention to the presence of the Mayors at the banquets offered to Gambetta. This last alone had any importance. It constrained the Government of M. Thiers to make a public declaration on the question of dissolution. M. Victor Lefranc, Minister of Home Affairs, being questioned by M. Raoul Duval, declared that the Assembly alone had the right to fix a term to its labours. M. Raoul Duval declared himself satisfied and withdrew his interpellation in the midst of so great an agitation that the sitting was suspended for ten minutes. This declaration and satisfaction given to the Right did not astonish the Left, although they saw the President declare himself against the position taken by Gambetta. Thus the aged Comte Jaubert, full of mistrust, cried out, while darkly frowning, in the sitting of the 27th of April: "I have never seen a Left so Ministerial."

Inquiry into Responsibility

But all attention was already held, all passions were at the pitch of excitement over the serious question, long confined in

the secrecy of the Committees, which was now to be debated in the public sittings, that of the responsibilities for the war. The form in which the debate came forward was the discussion of the reports of the Commission of Inquiry upon the contracts passed by the public services from the 18th of July, 1870, in order to meet the expenses occasioned by the war. No way of raising the question could have been more aggressive. When an inquiry is opened, party spirit comes in immediately.

The time when the Bonapartist party was lifting its head again was thought to be a favourable moment for bringing on the debate. A preliminary discussion took place on the 4th of May on the order to be assigned to the first statements of the Commission. The Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, who was the reporter, gave a detailed account, alike full and precise. The gaps and defects in the military organization of the Empire were laid bare. The defeats of France appeared as the natural consequence of a long period of negligence and absence of foresight. The reporter concluded by demanding the nomination of a Commission of Inquiry charged :

I. To inquire into the condition of the material of war existing on the 1st of July, 1870, in consequence of ordinary and extraordinary credits assigned to the purchase and transformation of this material.

II. To ascertain the use made of this material during the war.

III. To study the measures most suitable for ascertaining the actual condition of the arsenals.

The Assembly voted that the speech of the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier should be posted up in all the Communes of France.

The debate returned to this subject on several oc-

casions during the course of May. On the 21st of that month M. Rouher interpellated the Minister of War on the measures taken by him in consequence of the facts made known by the Committee on Contracts. The parliamentary return of the man who had been so long called the Vice-Emperor was an important event. The second period of the Government of Napoleon III had rested on the shoulders of this Auvergnat, the sturdy master of a submissive majority. Was he going to recover, as leader of a party in opposition, the authority that his vigorous fluency had secured for him? "The situation was a perilous one for him," wrote M. Thiers, "and he presented himself like a man with full consciousness of the danger. A vigorous and sensible reasoner when he touched upon all the levities of the Committee, he had the advantage over it, without however carrying the applause of the Assembly." While skilfully defending the Empire, he drew up a violent indictment against the Government of the 4th of September; he ended with a skilful appeal to the passions of the Assembly in protesting against the campaign for dissolution which had been opened against it.

On the following day, the 22nd of May, the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier and M. Gambetta replied to M. Rouher's speech. The Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier this time attacked the Empire and especially M. Rouher.

Anti-Bonapartist Speech of the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier

After having recalled the words addressed by M. Rouher to Napoleon III at the time when he set out for the theatre of war, he apostrophized his opponent in the following terms, which made a deep impression upon his audience:

You believe, do you, when you come and force me to fix responsibilities upon individuals that you are clear ?

Then you never had told to you, in the place of exile where you took refuge, how those hours weighed upon us when we felt the soil of our country being invaded by Prussia ? You never smelled the smoke of our burning cottages ; all that you knew was that every quarter of an hour you were told how one of our soldiers fell with glory. Believe me, you did not hear enough ! No ! do not think that it will be sufficient to say, as you said about the expedition to Mexico, whose memory you have so complacently called up : It is the secret of Providence, which does not always respect your own combinations. No ! it certainly is not enough.

I tell you that, whatever may be the indifference of all you light-of-hearts, whatever may be the displeasure at Chislehurst, there was an hour when you were obliged to listen to a voice, which cried " *Vare, redde legiones* " ! Give us back our legions ! Give us back the glory of our fathers ! Give us back our provinces !

And is this the only responsibility ? Have you bequeathed to us only difficulties, pain and disasters ? No ! you have done still worse ; you have bequeathed to us—and what a world of trouble we have to repair it—you have bequeathed to us a legacy of demoralization.

And the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier continues :

When a country abandons its liberties, when it abdicates the controlling power, when it no longer knows how to accommodate itself to those liberal measures which make the business of each the business of all ; when the citizen returns to his house and thinks himself very clever if he can tell himself that he has not meddled with politics, he does not know what politics are ; they are our blood, our money, our happiness. When a country does not know how to defend its own liberties, when it puts itself under the protection of some man found by Providence, the predestined result is what you have just seen : decomposition and demoralization.

In his conclusion the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier recalled this phrase uttered by M. Thiers : " A country must learn that it should never hand itself over to

one man, no matter what this man may be, nor what the circumstances." And he added :

And can we not say it with even more truth than he said it in reference to Napoleon I, when we think of the mourning, the sorrow and the shame that has been cost us by Napoleon III ?

Lastly, contrasting the work of the Empire with that accomplished by M. Thiers, the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier expressed himself as follows :

The country does not know what these fourteen months have brought upon that white head. And when you had him before you yesterday, when you were able to mark the traces of these labours upon his countenance, did you call to mind that time when he had struggled against you, when with splendid patriotism, enlightened by long experience, he had fought against all your follies ? He spoke to you, yes, indeed he did, of the necessary liberties ; he made his appeal to all that is generous in French hearts ; he wrestled with you at the time of the expedition to Mexico. He alone had the courage to do it ; and do you further remember that at that very time you had his house surrounded in order that the sound of howls and hisses might reach his ears ? The Commune more than completed your work : it profaned, destroyed that house ; but you had begun the work of destruction.

And now for us, concluded the speaker, the cause is heard, I beg the Assembly to finish the too long speech with a vow, and, as it were, a last prayer, which, in spite of myself, escapes from my heart : " May God, who loves this country, for it is to it that He has entrusted from all time the defence of the great and noble causes, may He spare it the last and cruellest of all humiliations : that of ever seeing its destinies confided to the hands which have served it so badly.

The official account adds : " Enthusiastic cries and prolonged applause." Nearly all the Deputies stand up and the sitting is interrupted. M. Rouher replied, resumed his arguments of the day before in favour of the Empire and against the Government of National Defence. His speech was mangled by multiplied interruptions.

It is interesting to analyze the attitude of M. Rouher under these circumstances. It reveals, in itself alone, the plans, the wounds, the hopes of the Imperial cause. His back bent, supporting with cool placidity the torrent of invectives pouring over him, keeping silence, he thinks only of the advantages which he will be able to gather from these famous sittings, and he is already counting up the silent camp of his future allies on the benches of the Right.

Grambetta's Speech

M Gambetta in his turn delivered a counter-thrust to the man whom he had called the day before: "the advocate of the Empire at bay."

The words of M. Gambetta were perhaps more vehement than those of the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier. He reproached the Imperial Government with having neither foreseen nor prepared the war; he, too, called up the Mexico affair, and produced a powerful effect by his peroration.

Mexico holds you, Mexico is at your heels, Mexico has already, by the eternal punishment which springs from events, taken vengeance upon all those who compromised the honour and greatness of their country in that detestable set-out. Yes! Justice has begun her work, she has seized each in his turn, both Morny, and Jecker, and Maximilian, and Napoleon III! She holds Bazaine. She is waiting for you!

The Assembly unanimously adopted, 676 voting, the following Order of the day proposed by the Duc de Broglie:

The National Assembly, trusting in the Commission on Contracts, and persevering in its resolution to follow up and wait for all responsibilities from before or after the 4th of September, passes to the Order of the day.

At the same time the *Journal Officiel*, beginning

on the 5th of May, published the deliberate opinions issued by the Council of Inquiry, instituted in conformity with clause 264 of the decree of October 13, 1863, under the presidency of Marshal the Comte Baraguay d'Hilliers. For the greater number of the capitulations the Council of Inquiry reported that the officers concerned had entirely fulfilled their duty; the review of the conditions of the capitulation of Phalsburg led to a proposal on the part of the Council of Inquiry for a recompense in favour of the officers who commanded the fortress. On the other hand, the Council of Inquiry set forth a severe judgment upon those extraordinary and, so to speak, unprecedented military events, which at Sedan and Metz have delivered two French armies to the enemy, and left the country without defenders. The conduct of the Emperor Napoleon at Sedan was severely qualified. This document clearly defines the events of the battle and the incidents of the capitulation.

As for Marshal Bazaine, he was sent before a Council of War. The Government gave orders for a charge to be drawn up against him on the 7th of May, 1872, and the indictment was entrusted to General Seré de Rivière. Claiming to make the first move, but in reality yielding to the public cry which accused him of treason, the Marshal had written to the President of the Republic formally to demand judges.

The Contracts of the 4th of September

At last in the last days of the month of July the debate on the conclusions of M. Riant's report relative to the contracts of the 4th of September came before the Assembly.

The discussion was lively. The Duc d'Audiffret-

Pasquier, MM. Naquet and Gambetta took part in it. Of the different bargains which had been concluded in these hours of haste one alone gave rise to serious observations. The personality of M. Gambetta was above suspicion, but a special point was made at the "Commission d'études" and notably at its president, and one of its members, in connexion with a contract concluded with the American adventurers, Billing, Saint-Laurent, etc., in consequence of which guns, offered at 35,000 francs per battery, would have been paid for at the rate of 70,000 francs. After a noisy debate, in which M. Gambetta defended the "Commission d'études," letters were read at the tribune inculpating the Lieutenant-Colonel who presided.

The Assembly by 371 votes to one—while the whole Left abstained from voting—decided that M. Riant's report should be referred to the Ministers competent to deal with it.

II

As ordinarily happens, passions had been quicker than facts. Men disputed about the responsibilities of the war before having cleared away the traces which it had left, and healed the wounds which it had caused.

M. Thiers devoted himself to these urgent duties in the midst of an inextricable entanglement of work and difficulties. All kinds of business were mixed together although distinct. He had to keep an eye upon everything, calculate, combine, delay or hurry on, according to the general design, and progress of a web, which was only known to a few, and which was incessantly entangled by the greater number. Parliaments must not be looked into too closely:

the apparent disorder of the sittings catches the attention, and turns it aside from the inner order, which subsists, thanks to the force and the latent work of the parties and interests. Even in the midst of tumult advantage and utility find their road.

During these fertile months, May, June, July, 1872, I see in progress amid the blindness of passions three principal works which serve as guiding threads to history: the negotiation for the definitive liberation of the territory, the discussion on the Military Bill, the financial labour, which prepares for the loan of the three milliards. The simultaneous labour and the necessary interrelations of these three enterprises fail to overwhelm an old man, who is hunted, even into the hours reserved for rest, by the hostility of parties, and who has to watch for parliamentary snares by day and by night.

Activity of M. Thiers.

A restoration as complete as was that of M. Thiers was needed to suffice to meet this triple task at the same time: it was necessary that he should be able to say, as he did say, and as he had a right to say, of each of the necessary competences, that it had been his for fifty years; his taste for business was needed, his ardent delight in work, his optimism, to enable him to apply himself to these multiplied duties at one and the same time. Others would have thought it wiser, more prudent, more in accordance with the present necessities, to proceed by degrees, and, as is said, to "tabulate the questions." Others would have dreaded an overweight of application and responsibilities with the danger of a breakdown on the road. But the little man was in a hurry: he felt death and intrigue upon his heels. With an energy, in which there was a kind of careless and confident lightness

of heart, he bent his shoulder to the triple burden.

What is really fine in all this conduct of an old man of long thoughts and short nights, is that he did not hesitate to let the Assembly attack the problem of our military forces at the very moment when the German troops still occupied French territory, and the war indemnity was not yet paid. Under the very foot of the enemy France lifted herself up, and gathered her forces together.

The victor could not get over it. He understood the bearing of this proof of moral energy, much more striking than the material recovery. He asked himself, or pretended to ask himself, if such a decision did not conceal evil designs: and when too evident facts convinced him of the contrary, he sought to discover by what demands he could arrest a progress so striking; hamper or weaken the work.

Anxiety of Germany

The occupation of the territory was a powerful means of action for Prince Bismarck; but to pocket the five milliards quickly was a strong temptation. The credit of France, which alone could permit her to free herself, depended upon calm in the relations between the two countries, and the, at least apparently, good understanding between the two Governments. Bismarck and Thiers both understood this.

The latter made use of his advantages by pushing on boldly the voting of the military Bills, simultaneously with the work of liberation. It was a way of saying to Germany: We pay, but we are free. There was in his motions, his calm, his explanations —for he did not even shirk explanations—a kind of superior play and haughty irony, which surprised the rough conqueror, irritated him, and sometimes, in spite of all, captivated him. The Emperor

William, who was at this time more amazed and more annoyed than any one else, said to General von Manteuffel: "This man is a veritable siren; he is so skilful and so cute, that my mind, in spite of myself, is acquiring a habit of no longer hating that word 'Republic,' my bugbear up till now; he would make me a Republican, if he could guarantee me his own immortality in the affairs of his country."[1]

And yet this same Emperor William, alarmed that such a motive power should exist in a people whom hostile declamation had depreciated so much in his eyes, the Emperor William kept applying the spur to Prince Bismarck, and putting him on his guard against the danger of a France prematurely revived; M. de Gontaut-Biron writes from Berlin, epitomizing the complications in which the negotiation for the payment of the last milliards of the indemnity was struggling: "The mind of the Emperor is seriously disturbed by the preparations of your military Bill, by the menace of revolutionary politics, consequently of 'revenge' inferred from the movements of Gambetta, and an alleged understanding, which is said to have been arrived at between him and M. Thiers, by the visible reorganization of the army, and the proportionate increase of the budget appertaining thereto. This is a theme continually repeated around him: the German press, and, in its train, the Italian press develop it day by day."

Through the intermediary of General von Manteuffel and the Comte de Saint-Vallier, analogous information was supplied to M. Thiers. The military

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. p. 98.

attaché at Paris, Von Bülow, was exaggerating the "enormous numbers" of the future French contingents: "According to him we should henceforth call a hundred thousand men under the colours each year, deducting non-effectives, which would represent an annual muster of 120,000 men. On the other side we should increase by eighty millions the figure of the war-budget under the Empire, and further, the creation of the new armament, guns, rifles, would not be included in it." [1]

Negotiations for the Evacuation

In the audience which the German Ambassador had of M. Thiers on taking his leave on the 7th of March, at the period of the Easter holidays, the President of the Republic had said to Count von Arnim that on his return to Paris he would enter upon the question of the payment of the three last milliards, and in consequence of the complete evacuation. France then was in advance of the engagements which she had contracted by two years. This proposal ought to have been agreeable to Germany. Now Count von Arnim had departed for Berlin, and although his absence was only to last a fortnight, he had not been seen again.

The Easter holidays were coming to an end. The financial year was getting on. It was impossible to think of issuing a loan of three milliards at a belated period in the summer. Furthermore, the presence of the Assembly was necessary to vote, if the case required it, the law which should approve the new convention in modification of the peace of Frankfort. M. Thiers began to wonder at the delay.

Having made the first overtures, he would have preferred not to take the first steps.

[1] Lettre du Comte de Saint-Vallier, 25 jan., 1872; *Ibid.* p. 135.

"I did not wish to hurry anything," he wrote, "because we should be exposed, if we showed ourselves over-anxious, to rendering the contracting parties on the other side proportionately less anxious; secondly, because the financial market required rest." Meanwhile, not hearing anything of Count von Arnim, nor of the result of his own overtures, he decided on the 11th of April to instruct M. de Gontaut-Biron to take up the conversation at Berlin, but with many precautions: "This business is so serious for France," he writes to him, "it touches everything so nearly, that it is a matter of serious importance to be well informed with regard to it. It is not necessary for me to tell you to deal with a light hand in all this, and to get your information, without however letting too much impatience be apparent."

M. de Gontaut-Biron says that at that time he was "somewhat of a novice in diplomacy." However, he acted like a true diplomatist: in fact, he exaggerated reserve and precautions to such an extent, that in the fear of expressing himself too plainly, he confined himself to almost incomprehensible allusions. He had a keen sensitiveness, perhaps too keen, to the kind of surprise and silent mistrust that the shrewd and bold proceedings of M. Thiers awakened at Berlin.

He was not kept short of warnings. The German financiers who had not forgiven the check to their combinations at Versailles came, in full friendliness, to impart their confidences to him: "I really must admit to you" (Von Bleichroeder whispered to him) "that Prince Bismarck is very well pleased to see you here, but he is not pleased with M. Thiers.—"And why is this?" I asked.—"Because M. Thiers is

increasing the French army to a tremendous extent. Prince Bismarck cannot see the re-organization of your army without anxiety. . . . He is assured that the new effective surpasses that of the Empire, which would be contrary to the promises made to him by M. Thiers at Versailles; that is the black spot on the horizon; the only one perhaps which occupies the mind of Prince Bismarck in reference to the maintenance of peace." Then it was the turn of the neutral diplomatists, these too assuredly with the best intentions: "The military party," said one of them to M. de Gontaut-Biron, "will always reproach Bismarck with having left Belfort to France, and he has not given up the idea of prolonging the occupation considerably, *perhaps of rendering it final*. . . . He knows, of course, that the treaties are in the way of this: but he reckons on some imprudence on your side. . . ." As we know that the retention of Belfort was the special point of honour with M. Thiers, this was the thing aimed at: "Here, they would very much like to keep Belfort. . . ." was said, still in confidence, to our Ambassador. And he writes on the 16th of April to M. Thiers: "I see the hidden thought of keeping Belfort again showing through. Lastly, Marshal von Moltke is brought into the fray. The smooth face exercised its fascinations upon the diplomatist, who opened the conversation himself: "Yes, yes," replied Von Moltke, smiling bitterly, "M. Thiers makes a pretty to-do with patching up your army. Next spring it will be in a condition to begin war again. . . ." And he hastened to calm the emotion which he caused by defending himself "with warmth" from the charge of desiring a return of hostilities.

M. de Gontaut-Biron, tossed between two contrary opinions on the subject of the Marshal's attitude, was reduced to asking himself whether, in spite of the allegations, which were transmitted to him from all sides, Count von Moltke ought, or ought not, to be classed " among the war-party." [1]

Thus warned, the Ambassador thinks it wiser to keep himself aloof, or rather, he takes the worst of measures in addressing himself, for want of anything better, to the German Ambassador at Paris, Count von Arnim, who was protracting his stay at Berlin.

The latter was then in the thick of his intrigues. The opportunity seemed to him an excellent one for taking his pleasure of both sides. He seized the slender thread passed to him by his French colleague and tangled it as he pleased. While M. de Gontaut-Biron, a little comforted, was writing to Paris: " I consider it a piece of good fortune to have had Count von Arnim to confer with."

M. Thiers, without knowing all the details, had rapidly comprehended (being warned for that matter by M. de Saint-Vallier, who was following the progress of the work at Nancy) that time was being wasted, and that France had no advantage in finessing; he writes on the 14th to M. de Gontaut-Biron: " You will ask simply and frankly to see Prince Bismarck; once in his presence you will tell him (it is the most natural thing in the world) that we want two things: to pay our debt and bring an end to the foreign occupation, which clearly proves our ardent desire for peace. . . ."

It was already too late. M. de Gontaut-Biron was in the hands of Count von Arnim. The latter

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, i. p. 161.

was jealous of the parallel conversation which was going on at Nancy. Prince Bismarck was capricious and distrustful. Our Ambassador, we must say the word, was afraid to approach him. He did not ask for a direct interview. He was afraid that Prince Bismarck, in his rough fashion, would take him to task on that question of the armaments and the Army Bill, which was at the bottom of the whole debate: "The essential point," he writes on the 19th of April, "is to know whether I ought to admit from the Chancellor of the Empire, or even from M. Debrück, the discussion of our armaments, which are the objection, or rather the pretext, in these delays introduced into the negotiation of our liberation." The negotiation is hampered. Soon Bismarck, abusing this delay and exaggerating his want of confidence, more or less genuine, joins to his other grievances the reproach which he urges against M. Thiers of delaying the overtures on the subject of the anticipation of payment. Sulkiness declares itself; everything is stopped. M. Thiers was almost resigned to letting the summer go by.

But this does not suit Berlin. Their object is to intimidate the French Government, to weigh heavily on it at the time of passing the Army Bill, to try and delay it, but not the payments of the indemnity; Count von Arnim, who had by now returned to Paris, wanted something else; he wanted the fall of M. Thiers. On his return, he saw Marshal Bazaine. He knew "through certain Deputies who do him the honour to chat with him," that feelings run very high and that a crisis was near. He developed, as being the veritable interest of Germany, the policy of hastening the *inevitable change of Government* by the restoration of the Napoleonic

Empire. . . . The thing to do is to proceed after the manner of 1814 in the case of the Bourbons, that is to say in such a way that the presence of the German troops in the county may again give the opportunity for exercising an influence upon the crisis. . . ." He admits "that it will not be very easy so to direct events that the Empire can actually jump into the saddle at the opportune moment. Only the Empire reckons that Germany will come to its assistance in her own interest, and the advances of the Empire must not be repelled, as of all the parties it is the only one, which openly courts the support of Germany, and inscribes reconciliation with her upon its programme."[1] These views, it is true, were the private property of the Ambassador. They went far beyond the thoughts of Bismarck. He recalled his agent to the reality of things by a smart cut, and pursued his own tactics by other roads, since this particular one was no longer open to him.

General von Manteuffel and M. de Saint-Vallier come upon the stage again; this is the channel through which it was thought desirable to obtain from Versailles explanations, pledges, declarations on the subject of the Army Bill. M. de Saint-Vallier then betook himself to Versailles on the 17th of April. He set forth the sentiments which he was told were those of Berlin. M. Thiers thought it a wise step to write to his Ambassador an explanatory letter, all that the latter will have to do in his interviews will be to draw his inspiration from this if he succeeds in meeting Prince Bismarck. But M. Thiers did not lose an inch of his position; he gave way neither on the question of the contingent,

[1] *Le procès d'Arnim*, p. 44.

nor on that of the military budget. He explained, here is the whole point: "We wish for peace, we ought to wish for it on behalf of our safety abroad. The contrary policy would be madness on our part: at my age I can wish for no other glory, if indeed I can aspire to any, than that of bringing peace to my country, of procuring for her, in one word, not a noisy reputation but happiness. . . . As for our alleged *armaments*, to describe them by this name is to cease to speak French. One is said to make armaments when one increases one's forces, and increases them with a view to prospective action. But I am busied with reconstituting the military forces of France in accordance with the views, which I have been setting forth for the last forty years, and which I have always described as: *peace footing in France*. . . . I want an army limited in number, but solid, disciplined, and as capable of maintaining order internally as of defending our independence externally. . . . I suppose we are not going to be asked to bid good-bye to our position in the world, and to our independence! Never was a word said to me, which could bear such an interpretation as this, at Versailles, during the painful negotiations for peace, nor during the negotiations of every kind which have followed since. It is true, there was a doubt as to whether we could keep our engagements, pay the exorbitant sum of five milliards. It was doubted: well! *we can*. We want to pay, we are going to pay, and people would pick a quarrel with us because we wish to re-establish our country morally, materially, politically! Never had such an attempt been made, never had such an insinuation been attempted, and I certainly hope that it will not be attempted to-day!"

In a conversation which he had had in the first days of the month of May with Count von Arnim, M. Thiers had expressed himself in the most elevated terms on the present and future relations of France and Germany. The ambassador reported on this conversation to his Government: "M. Thiers told me, and repeated in the warmest terms, how sincere and ardent is his desire to maintain peace, a long peace. France, he said, could not wage a new war. So he tries to avoid all fresh complications, to anticipate all conflicts, wherever they may possibly happen. 'After many years,' he added, 'when France has recovered her strength, her dominant tendency would necessarily be to seek compensation for the losses she has suffered, and if one day Germany should be drawn into a difficulty with other Powers the time would have come to settle these accounts, but that would not mean that, in the case contemplated, France would have to rise against Germany. It would not be impossible to imagine that Germany would at that time be disposed to buy the French alliance by compensations which would render war useless." [1]

M. Thiers did not refer himself to the Ambassador whose fidelity he began to suspect. He thought he ought to avail himself of the convenient way by Nancy to define the situation with reference to the Army Bill. M. de Saint-Vallier, who had returned to his post, was authorized to remit, on the 21st of April to General von Manteuffel, a memoir in which the views of M. Thiers upon the reconstitution of the army were set forth. The President would oppose compulsory service; he wanted a professional

[1] *Le Procès d'Arnim*, p. 42.

army; the law of 1832 resolutely and firmly applied; he was certain to get it. Now the law of 1832 was not a law for war; it was a law of good internal administration, since it limited the total effective of the army to 400,000 men.

M. de Saint-Vallier even gave the rapidly sketched picture of the future military organization. "To sum up," he concluded, "it is proposed to make use solely of the law of 1832, of the effective of that period but seriously kept up, not allowing it to fall below the proportions voted, as was done when it was necessary to cover the Chinese or Mexican expeditions. That is the truth and nothing more."

The diplomatist, duly authorized, further insisted on the peaceful sentiments of M. Thiers and on his authority, which was beginning to be debated: "M. Thiers has never varied on this subject; he said so to Prince Bismarck at the time of the signing of the peace, he has repeated it since on all occasions; he repeats it to-day; he considers a prolonged peace necessary to France. The opponents of our Government will object that it is provisional, and may disappear any day. That danger is not to be feared. The Assembly is divided into fractions, no one of which is strong enough to take and exercise power. . . . M. Thiers rests neither on the Right nor on the Left, but on both equally, using one to keep the other within the bounds of wisdom, and knowing how to group and unite them, when occasion arises. There can then be confidence in the duration of the Government, as there can also be assurance of its firmly peaceful intentions."[1] And Bismarck received this memoir, and

[1] *Libération et Occupation*, i. p. 289.

only found himself in a greater difficulty than ever; M. Thiers had concluded his letter of the 18th of April, 1872, to M. de Gontaut-Biron with this paragraph, which comprises his last word: "We are ready to treat any day they please, and consequently we shall not be the parties to blame, if by letting the time for treating, in one word the financial season, slip by, we are delayed by six months. . . ." Six months' delay in the payment of so large a sum was not a prospect calculated to rejoice the heart of the Chancellor. If any accident intervened, what reproaches, what regrets!

Discussion of the Army Bill

The discussion of the Army Bill began in the Chamber on the 27th of May. Everybody was agreed in recognizing that the system which had prevailed under former systems of Government was no longer suited to-to-day. Everybody admitted that all Frenchmen were bound to give personal military service. M. Thiers himself was carried away by the general current of feelings and surrendered himself to the reasons advanced by the Committee. In spite of the ardour of his convictions he abandoned the defence of the principle of the law of 1832, and no longer disputed the necessity of calling all able-bodied citizens under the colours henceforth. But, if the principle was admitted, two systems demanded consideration: the supporters of the one upheld, in a more or less attenuated form, the militia army; the others limited themselves to the professional army, while completing the active service by military instruction and the eventual summons to the reserve."

From the beginnings of French history the two systems have succeeded one another, following the laws of a regular alternation resulting from the

course of events. The army of the Middle Ages, the feudal army, was a militia army: the people owed military service to their feudal lords and to the sovereign only at prescribed periods and according to certain rules accurately determined. But when it came about that the kingdom was in peril, when the Monarchy was obliged to proceed to successive campaigns, long and sustained, the levy was shown to be ineffective, and recourse was then taken to the process of enlistments, and the constitution of professional armies: "routiers," "soldiers," "gens d'armes," Swiss, German, Albanian, Scotch regiments, such were the names of these troops recruited by the offer of pay, and who alternated in the course of our military history with the contingents brought into the army by the feudal ban, the "francs-archers," "gens des communes," etc.

The Revolution had known voluntary enlistments and levies in mass. The First Empire had had recourse to the system of recruiting by lot, which involved, fundamentally, the principle of compulsory service. This last system had been strongly organized by the "Gouvion Saint-Cyr" law, and the nation had become accustomed to delivering to the Government the elements of a professional army, recruited by lot; the period of service being nine years, the richest part of the nation exonerated itself from military duty by having recourse to substitution by payment.

This social inequality and the disproportionate sacrifice imposed on men, who after their retirement were, so to say, unfitted for civil life, were atoned for, in the eyes of statesmen, by the quality of the soldiers, and the strong solidarity of the regiments and

the army. The army organized by the Gouvion Saint-Cyr law, modified in 1832, had made the campaigns of Africa, the Crimea, Italy. But it had not been able to meet the impulse of a whole people in arms pouring over France in 1870, and it had succumbed at Reichshofen, at Sedan, and at Metz. The "great battalions" had won the day.

So then, for social reasons, for political reasons, for military reasons, France was returning by a fresh alternation to a system approaching the militia system, "personal military service equal and compulsory for all." As at the end of the Hundred Years' War, as at the revolutionary period, she wished, as the result of a fresh invasion, to have "the great battalions" on her side too.

However, financial necessities apply a forcible limit to the application of the system, simple as it is, which answers to the equalizing formula: everybody enlisted, trained and a soldier. The finances of the State permit the maintenance of only a limited number of men under the colours in each year. If it is claimed to include all citizens in the regiments, they must be kept only for a short time; if it is wished to keep them several years for purposes of training, it is necessary to leave a corresponding number in their homes.

To sum up, the whole difficulty of the military problem in modern times is epitomized in two questions: What is the time necessary for the soldier of the active army to be drilled, disciplined, trained? What are the financial resources of which the State can dispose to support a more or less numerous annual contingent, and keep it a longer or shorter time under the colours? According as one or the other of the two points of view is the preoccupation

of the statesman, the type of the militia or the type of the professional army is approached.

In 1872 the two systems claimed consideration. The one party affirmed that three years are sufficient to form a complete soldier: they recommended ensuring the number by the relative shortness of service; they added that after spending three years in barracks, the soldier cannot but acquire a distaste for work and the habit of idleness; they demanded that too heavy a burden should not be imposed on the nation, if the nation was to support it. Generals Trochu, Billot, Guillemant, Chareton were the chief defenders of this point of view. They appealed notably to the authority of General Lamoricière.

Their adversaries brought forward several very strong objections: you will have men, and perhaps even drilled men, but you will not have soldiers; they invoked in their turn the words of Marshal MacDonald: the soldiers of one and the same regiment must be, so to speak, "sewn together," and you will never obtain this result, they added, with your young recruits, who will be joined at haphazard in the hour of danger by the men of the different reserves. You will have for soldiers nothing but those "puffy shop-walkers fresh from the counter," of whom Marshal Villegagnon spoke at one time with so much contempt. Furthermore, if you had the men, you would not have the regimental officers. According to the hypothesis even of General Trochu, in the first year the soldier is drilled, in the second he is formed, and it is only in the third that he is complete. . . . and—it was further added—that is the moment when you send him away. How will you form the staff of non-

commissioned officers, which the very organization of her civil life and her high birth-rate supplies for the German army, and who under your system will always be in default in the French army? Now a troop without officers is nothing but a herd. The German victories threaten to bring upon you the big battalion mania. You exaggerate the scope of the precedent of 1870. This is the only time on which numbers have got the better of quality. All other precedents, all competent opinions are on the other side.

The debates lasted for nearly a month. M. Thiers had at first, as we have seen, declared himself strongly for the professional army. Before the Commission he had not concealed his preference for seven or eight years' service in the active army. Enlisting by the application of universal and compulsory service, he said, sacrifices quality to quantity; it is a cause of weakness rather than of strength for an army. However, by reason of the insistence of the Commission he had not absolutely opposed the five years' service, which, for the rest, had only been voted in the Commission itself by *a majority of one*. But on the minimum of five years he refused to compromise.

A reason, which had quite another importance in his eyes than that of a mere question of doctrine, brought him to defend his opinion with energy: well up as he was in the attitude or the intimidatory processes of the German Chancellor, and above all of the German Military Party, he wished to be ready to meet every event. Now he knew that with a three years' service in the eventuality of an immediate war the French army, composed of young recruits, would have no solidity, while the five years' service would enable him to keep the two classes

of trained men and experienced soldiers, thanks to whom it would be possible immediately to bring into the field against the German army regiments strongly organized. The five years' Bill was for him, as he said, the application of an idea which had been ripening for forty years, but it was also the surest guarantee for peace in the delicate circumstances in which France found herself involved.

Continuation of the Negotiations for Evacuation

The discussion is to begin before the National Assembly. M. Thiers has not yet intervened; it is the time when clouds are gathering at Berlin, at Nancy, in every place where any light can be got upon the sentiments of the German Government.

On the 4th of May the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, in a speech on the subject of the war contracts, had declared himself in favour of compulsory service. M. de Rémusat, Minister of Foreign Affairs to M. Thiers, himself expressed his anxiety and the last resolution of the President in the following letter, which he addressed to M. de Gontaut-Biron: "A thing, which will have failed to reassure the King of Prussia, is the speech of the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, who, so far as talent is concerned, has well deserved his immense success, but who, I am afraid, is not so prudent as he is eloquent. He has caused shouts to be uttered in favour of compulsory service, and you know what umbrage is taken in Germany at this system, which, however, would probably give us an army anarchical rather than warlike. . . . I will tell you in all confidence that this question of the reorganization of the army has always appeared to me the most critical of all, and if there is a rock upon which we may split, I fear that this will be the one."

Count von Arnim enclosed himself in an alarming

reserve. In a singular letter, which deserves to be quoted, he demands secret audience of the President of the Republic: "Mr. President, I want to have a little conspirator's chat with you, the details of which will not be shouted by the newspapers on the roofs. If you can receive me to-morrow at midday, I shall come to Versailles either by rail or on horseback.—P.S. To give myself a little air of mystery I shall enter by the door on M. Rémusat's side."

M. Thiers, somewhat taken aback, replied however with much wisdom: "Our interviews are quite legitimate and even patriotic, since both you and I serve our countries to the best of our ability." [1]

However, M. Thiers received the ambassador at the hour appointed; he learned nothing but fresh difficulties on the subject of the delays of payments and the evacuation, in the midst of which he thought he could distinguish some calculations of business men and financiers.

On the 27th of May, the day of the opening of the debate, M. de Saint-Vallier on his side had learned that the attitude in Germany was getting worse. General von Manteuffel and Von Treskow repeat to him "that their news from Berlin is bad, that the mistrust in our direction is increasing, that the suppositions of a secret thought on our part of recommencing the war are multiplying; it is repeated that we have not made any serious proposals for the anticipation of the payments, and that we are endeavouring to lull the vigilance of the Prussian Government by means of sham negotiations; in the Emperor's circle the military men are in a state of agitation and the Sovereign is a prey to grave disquietude." And

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, pp. 295 and 440.

things go on thus accentuating themselves day by day. Yielding to the pressure of M. de Saint-Vallier, whose sensitiveness visibly serves the designs of the German Government, General von Manteuffel imparts to him in the strictest confidence, that "Von Moltke is recommending him to take precautions, the probability of a resumption of hostilities on the part of France seeming to be increasing."

It is added that the French army is already much finer, stronger, and more formidable than it was before our reverses; that we are increasing it day by day; that we are recalling gradually the soundest and most experienced troops from Africa, and that again in these last days two fresh regiments have arrived from Algeria.

From St. Petersburg the same pessimistic tone. General Le Flô writes on the 23rd of May: "*It is certain* that the reports of the Russian agents in Germany agree in representing the military party as animated by the worst disposition, and committed to a very hostile agitation against us; it is equally certain that public expression is given to spiteful regret at not having beaten us down sufficiently, nor punished us enough, and that the necessity of a new war is very loudly proclaimed. . . . This language has been held, even here, by Prince William of Baden. . . The official world of St. Petersburg does not believe in the intention of Prince Bismarck to treat seriously with us. . . . The rumour was also spread yesterday on the Exchange that M. d'Oubril (Russian Ambassador at Berlin) is said to have written, after an interview with Bismarck, that the latter is supposed to have said, that by reason of the condition of temper in France he would not venture to guarantee a duration of more

than six months to the peace." General Le Flô adds: "All that makes me regret that the debate on our Army Bill should be so near." [1]

The knot tightens. M. Thiers stands firm. He has formed the design of making the Assembly feel the weight of his anxieties, in order to determine it to accept his system, but on the other hand to make use of the debate that had been opened to express frankly at Berlin his way of seeing things. As an experienced statesman, as a consummate orator, he knew that a public explanation, when given by a man who is master of his words, is often the best way of solving difficulties and clearing an overloaded atmosphere.

In any case he established the situation in a letter which he addressed in the middle of the debate on the Bill to M. de Saint-Vallier, May 29, 1872: "There is no truth in what is written from Berlin. We have no idea whatever of war, and the proof is still that we want to pay. . . . We have, they say, made nothing but illusory proposals, without anything serious in them. Now, here is what we have proposed, either a loan of three milliards at 5 per cent., or one milliard at 5 per cent., one milliard on loan repayable by drawings, one milliard in values of the Berlin Treasury. No answer. . . . We are now told that these proposals were not thought serious, because we had not said a word about evacuation. . . . Frankly, it was not for us to take the initiative on this point. We had to pay, the Germans to evacuate." [2]

Count von Arnim

The discussion goes on. Count von Arnim reports daily to Berlin. In what spirit it is

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, i. p. 350.
[2] *Ibid.*, t. i. p. 353.

easy to guess; for on the same day, the 20th of May, the Ambassador caused an article to be inserted in the *Cologne Gazette*, of which he was the author, which might have set fire to the inflammable materials already accumulated: "We beg you, good Frenchmen and bad politicians, not to get heated. . . . The state of affairs is such, in virtue of treaties, that if France paid, for example, between now and the 28th of February, 1876, 2,999,999,999 francs, the army of occupation would still have the right, in order to guarantee the payment of the remaining franc, to hold Rheims, Epernay, Toul, Verdun, Nancy, Belfort, etc. We do not know, as we have already said, how the German Government will reply to the proposals of the French Government; but, in reality, if it consented to the evacuation, only on condition that France pledged herself not to collect an army, and not to construct fortifications in the six Departments to be evacuated, if it further reserved to itself the right of keeping a garrison at Belfort, Toul, Verdun, till the payment was completed, it is free to do so. The French ought before all things to remember that we are not bound to anything." The precision of the information, and the hardness of the polemics revealed an official origin. M. de Rémusat was seriously deceived in not having any doubt whatever of the personal sentiments of Count von Arnim, which he believed to be "benevolent"; but he was authorized to ask his agents with increasing anxiety: "To what point was this implacable predisposition to hostility rising?"

At this moment M. Thiers, who at the bottom preserved his fine confidence, wished to show himself more embarrassed than he really was; on the side

of Germany, as on the side of the Assembly, he plays the game of his resignation: "I have several times told Count von Arnim that if by any chance I myself was the obstacle it had only to be insinuated to me, and told me, and I should find a pretext for retiring. . . ." Loud protestations from Von Arnim! If the Government of M. Thiers should break up, who would have found, who would have paid the three milliards? [1]

Things have reached this point. The English Ambassador has just whispered a last confidence into the ear of M. de Gontaut-Biron: "The Emperor William is old; he believes in your desire for revenge; he wishes to render it impossible by taking all the military precautions which appear to him to be necessary, the enlargement and armament of the strong places in Alsace-Lorraine, the continuance of the occupation of your territory, etc. . . ." [2] And M. de Gontaut-Biron adds by way of commentary: "The adoption of compulsory service by the Assembly is the pretext put forward to awaken German apprehensions. This measure is already represented as a proof of the wish of France to prepare herself." In military circles nothing was talked of but the *provocations* of France. The note is always the same, the veiled threat; there is a wish to obtain from M. Thiers a declaration on the question of our military strength, a formal promise for the rejection of compulsory service, or at least a postponement of the debate. However, the first letters by which M. Thiers explained himself in regard

[1] See the whole, so characteristic, incident in the *Procès d'Arnim*, p. 50.

[2] Letter of June 6, *ibid.* p. 387.

to M. de Gontaut-Biron, and the attitude taken by him, were known at Berlin.

The President turned a deaf ear. He did not give way. The discussion went on before the Assembly. The arguments favourable to three years' service seemed to be winning. At the very least it may be feared that an amendment of General Charreton proposing four years' service may unite the majority. At Berlin it is known how tightly the cord is stretched. They are face to face with a resolution taken in France. Will they drive things to the end? Will there be a rupture?

At this moment came the first relaxation of the suspense, suddenly. On the 7th of June Von Thiele, Bismarck's second in command, informed the French Ambassador, who immediately telegraphed to Paris, "that the documents with reference to the affair—he is speaking of the anticipation of the payment of the indemnity—hitherto at Varzin, have returned from thence with the Chancellor's opinion; that the King, after having reflected and made notes upon this opinion, would send it back to the Chancellor, and that the answer would be in agreement with the wishes of M. Thiers, further discussion having only to do with forms and details." "My interlocutor repeated to me twice," says M. de Gontaut-Biron: "You can have confidence."[1] Bleichroeder the banker came again to the Embassy; this time his confidences are in the reverse sense of those which he had made fifteen months before. "He is one of the Montronds of Prince Bismarck," adds the French Ambassador, "but with less intelligence than Talleyrand's friend. However, his interest is con-

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. i. p. 391. See also the letter of the 8th of June, p. 395.

cerned. He affirms that the business will go well, and that Bismarck wishes to come to an understanding with us." M. de Saint-Vallier is still busy discerning according to the confidences of General von Manteuffel the "mysterious combinations of Prince Bismarck, the alarming rumours which come from across the Rhine," while M. Thiers, reassured, decides to mount the tribune and utter aloud the explanations which are expected from him. He spoke on the 10th of June.

He spoke for the Assembly, he spoke for the country, he also spoke for Germany. He realized his plan of using for the service of his views the very difficulties which he encountered on one side and on the other. He accepted the principle of compulsory military service which had caused so much anxiety in Germany; but he rejected the three years' service; he clung to the professional army; above all he fastened himself, if I may use the phrase, upon the five years' service in the active army, and he did not conceal his real reasons: "This is very far from my ideal, he said, but with these five years *we shall have two or three classes to bring into line immediately*, and we shall be able to form good regimental staffs." He insisted. He adjured the Assembly.

The three years' service brought together all the partisans of big battalions, and those of the militia; the possible majority was increased by all the electoral weaknesses. General Trochu covered this disturbing coalition with his name and eloquence. M. Thiers perceived the peril, and resuming in this quarter the tactics which had served in the quarter of Germany, he declared that if the vote was not in accordance with his views he was ready to retire.

Immense confusion followed these words. Cries

arose from all sides: "You have no right to; you cannot retire; France has need of you." He replied with vivacity: "Everybody is free! I am, as much as you are, and I ought to be still more so, because I have a crushing responsibility. If the law is a bad one, you will have the right in two or three years' time to visit it upon me, as you had the right to visit it upon those who declared war so lightly. I take my stand on it; and I say that I shall leave these walls in profound affliction if you do not vote the five years. I add that I shall not be able to accept the responsibility of applying the law."

A kind of panic spread through the Assembly. Emotion reached its height. However, little by little the sentiments of this wavering crowd yielded to the tenacity of the enlightened old man. There was some hope for the amendment of General Chareton, who proposed to fix the time of service in the active army at least at four years. The amendment was rejected by 477 to 56, 172 not voting. The five years' service was adopted.

Such was this sitting, whose effect was so great, according to the words of the Duc de Broglie, that none of the members of the Assembly who were present will ever forget it.

M. Thiers, not by a concession to Germany, as some thought fit to insinuate, but by a nice appreciation of what was useful and possible, passed between the rocks, and outwitted a manoeuvre dangerous to the future and the honour of the country, while imposing his own views and a good Army Bill upon the Assembly.

The new Law of the Army

The new organic military law was published on the 27th of July, 1872. The following is an epitome of it.

Every Frenchman is bound to personal military service, and can be called from the age of twenty to that of forty.

Substitution is abolished.

Substitution of numbers is permitted only between brothers.

The total duration of the military service is made up as follows: five years in the active army, four years in the reserve of the active army, five years in the territorial army, six years in the reserve of the territorial army.

Each class is divided into two equal portions, of which the one remains five years under the colours, and the other, without ceasing to form part of the active army, into the ranks of which it can be called in case of war, returns to its homes on unlimited leave, and exercises there all the rights of a citizen: the right of voting, the right of contracting marriage. The division between these two parts of the contingent is made by means of drawing lots.

The law foresees a certain number of cases of dispensation affecting four classes of young men; the supporters of a family, those who in the exercise of their professions render important services to the State and could not be withdrawn from their vocation without public loss, those who are destined for the liberal professions, and lastly those who belonging to industrial careers could not without serious inconvenience be immediately withdrawn from their counter or their workshop.

The supporters of families, professors, students in theology, alone obtain dispensations properly so called; to others are granted either suspensions of the call, which can be renewed from year to year up to the age of twenty-four, or permission to enlist

voluntarily, before the call upon their class, for the duration of a year.

This last arrangement constitutes what has been called "the one year's voluntary service." This favour is not given arbitrarily. It must be won and even paid for. The volunteers, in fact, produce a diploma, a certificate of having finished their studies, or pass an examination; they equip themselves at their own expense, and remain one whole year in regiment. At the end of their year's service they pass a leaving examination, and can be retained with the corps for another year by the decision of the colonel if their military instruction is incomplete.

Article 69 stipulates that the young men called to take part in the army receive primary instruction compulsorily. Those who at the end of their service do not know how to read and write are detained with the corps for another year.

The passing of the law with the principle of compulsory service, and that of the five years' service in the active army had the deepest influence upon the destinies of France and her position in the world.

This country, without a master, without a dynasty, one might almost say, without a Government, imposed so heavy a burden upon itself. A military burden, a pecuniary burden, a social burden. The nation accepted this five years' clog fastened upon the peaceful activity of each generation; she pledged herself to make, as long as it should be necessary, the sacrifice of the enormous sums which it was necessary to provide to re-model the army, enrol the fresh troops on active service, and the reserves of the territorial army; she voluntarily submitted to the law of military discipline, and the law of social discipline, which is the consequence

of the former. She wished to live: she claimed to resume her independent place among the nations; she did not bow her head before the decree of destiny. She was conscious of her indispensable part in the future, and of her necessary greatness.

Other military Measures

The passing of this law involved a series of further measures. An army postulates armament; national defence demands the creation of a whole system of protection, routes of communication and material arrangements, realized within a fixed time according to a programme, prearranged and burdensome. To conceive, draw up this programme, and carry through its execution methodically, demands another kind of decision, and another not inferior tenacity.

On the 29th of July, 1872, the Government created a Committee of Defence, presided over by the Minister of War, and composed of: Marshal MacMahon, Generals Forgeot, Susane, de Berckheim, de Chabaud-Latour, Frossard, Seré de Rivière, Ducrot, Frébault, and Chanzy. Re-organized by a decree dated June 11, 1873, this Council delivered itself to a minute labour of inquiries, researches and plans, which was to end in 1874 in the adoption of the system of "defensive curtains," that is to say in the constitution of an artificial frontier on the north-east of France.

M. Thiers, without being convinced of the excellence of the method, bowed, however, before the opinion of the professional men. He fastened above all upon the general organization of the army. He watched over the prompt mobilization by the method of *permanent formations*, which consist in the existence not only of regiments, but of army corps, previous to war.

He brought all his pains to bear upon the repair of material, the creation of new artillery. The war-budget reached the sum total of five hundred millions. He grouped the regimental units, the batteries, hitherto scattered in small garrisons. Satisfied with the system of encampments, he created two new camps: that of Avor, near Bourges, and Ruchard, near Tours.

The general effect of these measures was of a nature to form a lively impression upon the German Government. So far as concerned the passing of the Army Bill, what could not be prevented had been endured; they had found satisfaction in the defeat which M. Thiers himself formulated on the 12th of June in a letter to M. de Saint-Vallier: "I have been obliged to fight with the utmost vigour in order to get the principle of the system rejected, and I have succeeded." It was well known at Berlin that, on the contrary, the principle of the system had been adopted, and that the Army Bill, which made it possible to reconstitute the French army without allowing it to pass through a crisis of transformation and weakness, was a good law, and in consequence a dangerous law for a prospective adversary.

Accordingly there was no longer any question of that speedy resumption of hostilities, about which so much noise had been made a few weeks earlier. The last echo of it is found in the correspondence of M. de Saint-Vallier of the 3rd and 4th of June: "The disturbing word of command comes from Berlin; all the letters received by the officers who are in France are unanimous in causing them to contemplate war as probable for the spring of 1873."

And again: "The principal aim of your letter is to know whether the hostile ideas, which dominate all minds in Germany at the present moment, have won upon the King and the Chancellor. As for the King, no doubt is possible . . .; his circle share the conviction which he holds of a speedy resumption of the war. . . . As for the Chancellor, inaccessible in his retreat at Varzin, he watches the progress of the conflagration which he has certainly lighted and which he carefully feeds."[1] M. Thiers received these alarmist tidings at the moment when the dispatches of M. de Goutant-Biron reached him. M. Thiers reassured M. de Saint-Vallier with a smile.

He knew that he was in the middle of the negotiation for the arrangement which was to determine the conditions of the payment of the last three milliards, and the progressive evacuation of the Departments under occupation.

Continuation of the Negotiations with Germany

Meanwhile a certain positive work remained over from the whole of that great diplomatic mechanism, which was set in action so powerfully during the spring of the year 1872, and whose action was conducted simultaneously at Berlin with M. de Gontaut-Biron, at Paris by Count von Arnim, and at Nancy with M. de Saint-Vallier, and it is seen appearing in the negotiations, and written down in the text of the Convention by which they were brought to an end on the 29th of June.

There is no longer any talk now of "possible rupture," "approaching hostilities," "protracted and perhaps definitive occupation," but only of persistent mistrust with the whole apparatus of

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. i. p. 378.

minute precautions, and a useless display of bad temper.

Prince Bismarck having adopted a line, that is to say, having taken the line of pocketing the three milliards as soon as possible, goes straight to his end. He hurries on the conclusion, and wishing to make no change in his method of huckstering, he goes halfway himself in order, on the other side, to impose his restrictions. He accepted the advanced payment, and did not put the idea of corresponding evacuation on one side. But while the President had, in conformity with the text of the Treaty, formed the hope of substituting financial guarantees for the territorial guarantees after the payment of two milliards, and in consequence of putting an end to the occupation, while he had considered at least the adoption of a system of evacuation, graduated in proportion to the payment, as assured, he was met by a refusal to follow him in these anticipations, legitimate and reasonable though they were. The possibility of substituting financial guarantees in the place of territorial guarantees was not conceded to him except as a concession entirely at the disposal of Germany; as to the gradual evacuation, if it was recognized that two Departments would be set free after the payment of the first half milliard, and two others after that of the second, it was, on the other hand, indicated that the evacuation would not necessarily carry with it a progressive diminution in the figure of the army of occupation; so that the Departments not evacuated, according to the scale and measure of the liberation of the others, would be overwhelmed with a burden porportionately heavier, and proportionately more intolerable.

This stipulation was a futile and even dangerous aggravation; it was to occasion in the future the most serious difficulties; it gave an official sanction to the threats, which there was no absence of willingness to circulate by a thousand indirect ways, the threat of a prolonged occupation of those unhappy districts, and the still more definite threat, still more irritating to M. Thiers, of the possible non-execution of the Treaty of Peace in the matter of Belfort.

Upon this point the anxiety of the President was most keen; he expressed it to M. de Rémusat, who for that matter shared it: "A formidable question may arise in a year or two," I said to him. "An indignity, similar to the refusal of England to restore Malta to us, will perhaps be attempted in the case of Belfort. I do not think that they will venture to do so in the face of Europe. None the less, we must foresee everything, and I could not, for my part, put up with a felony of that kind, if our conquerors wished to impose it." "No more would I accept it," replied M. de Rémusat." "France alone," I resumed, "will have the right to decide the question. All that we can do is to put her to-day in a condition to reply to it otherwise than by resignation." I informed the Minister of War of our anxieties, and, in the profoundest secrecy, we took together the measures demanded by the situation. A little time afterwards we were able to be certain that by 1873 France would be able to enforce respect for the treaties if any attempt were made to violate them."[1]

In the midst of all these difficulties there was signed at Paris, by Count von Arnim and M. de Rémusat that convention of the 29th of June, 1872, which was, in

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 302.

fact, the first action in a great work, that of the liberation. The French public was in complete ignorance. Accordingly, when it was in possession of the text of an agreement, which should have caused it great pleasure, it was struck chiefly by the reservations and restrictions. It experienced only a deep disappointment. The convention submitted to the Assembly on the 2nd of July was immediately passed (July 7) on the report of the Duc de Broglie, "by a sad and silent unanimity."

Each of these new negotiations was perhaps a triumph for the sublimated and cruel art of Prince Bismarck, but not so great a success if considered from the higher point of view of the stability of Europe.

III

Financial Measures

The Convention of the 29th of June was not yet voted when the Government and the Assembly had taken their ground to meet the new charges which the near eventuality of the payment of the indemnity and the issue of a very heavy loan was going to bring to bear upon the budget.

Furthermore, France was far from being out of her troubles in what concerned the liquidation of the past and the establishment of a financial equilibrium. The new taxes previously voted occasioned serious disappointments; on the other hand the expenses were singularly in excess of the estimates. The work had been too hasty. The budget required serious improvements, and in some points reconstruction; in any case the deficit was not met.

Budget of 1873

Accordingly, after having passed, in the middle of very lively debates, a law in

reference to the Council of State, which was only to have a brief existence, and which assigned to the Assembly itself the nomination of members of the Council, the Chamber in its committees and public sittings set in movement during the winter 1872–1873 the double work of preparing the budget of 1873, and of the financial reforms which were again judged to be necessary.

The draft of the budget of 1873 had been deposited at the tribune on the 14th of May, 1872, by the new Minister of Finance, M. de Goulard, successor to M. Pouyer-Quertier. It first established the necessity of increasing the total of the receipts by 191 millions of francs. After the different modifications through which it passed the balance was to be found by the following figures: 2,365,677,869 francs expenditure, and 2,476,470,630 receipts, which gave a surplus of 110,000,000 francs on receipts. It was learned later, by the law for the settlement of accounts, that the total expenditure was really 2,724,482,658 francs, while the receipts only amounted to 2,447,060,176 francs, whence a deficit of 277,422,482 francs (£11,096,899) which had to be met by the balance from the loan of three milliards.

No great illusions then were formed upon the chances of obtaining the financial balance which was sought. But the Government and the Assembly devoted themselves none the less to this difficult task with great application and perfect loyalty. The wish to liberate France, and honour her engagements was paramount.

Two hundred million of fresh taxes seemed necessary; the money was looked for either in the remodelling of the former taxes, or in examining afresh the various combinations which had already

been adopted or rejected. M. Thiers always held in suspense the tax upon raw materials, whose return he estimated at ninety-three millions.

The different proposals with reference to a tax upon income which had been previously rejected left a trace upon the budget of 1873: this is the creation of a tax which, for that matter, was to have no future, upon the interest on mortgages, and above all of an annual tax of 3 per cent. on income derived from floating capital. The French public debt and foreign State loans were exempt from this tax. M. Thiers had said, in speaking of the French public debt: "If the State made the mistake of imposing this tax, it would punish itself, for when it had recourse to its credit, it would have to pay more dearly for the capital." This remark was true, particularly so on the eve of the day on which the most formidable loans were going to be issued that financial history had ever known.

The Assembly rejected a number of different proposals, and notably the tax upon the amount of business transactions, and a plan of an additional tax upon salt, but it added sixty centimes to the principal of the premium upon patents; if it rejected a fresh increase of the duty upon alcohol, it dealt severely with fraudulent evasion, and submitted the distilleries to inspection: the loss to the Treasury under this head was estimated at fifty or sixty millions. The monopoly of the manufacture and sale of matches was instituted (August 2, 1872).

The Assembly thought that an important source of economy might be found in the revision of the administrative services; the point was the famous reduction, always being announced, of the number and salaries of functionaries. A parliamentary

Commission had been charged to examine attentively the special estimates of each of the ministerial departments. Taking inspiration from the labours of this Commission, the budget Commission had reduced the credits proposed by the Government by twenty-one millions. But the Chambers in France will always have a tender spot for the administrative departments; in fact there is a reciprocity of services. In spite of the exceptional gravity of the circumstances, the National Assembly only consented to a reduction of twelve millions instead of twenty-one millions proposed.

Lastly, it was necessary to deal with the tax on raw materials. The President of the Republic still demanded it with the same insistence. A kind of engagement had been entered into with him. Furthermore, there was a disinclination to leave the budget in deficit, at least in apparent deficit. Although the Assembly did not form any great illusions upon the bearing of this vote—and in fact the results obtained in the sequel did not seem to justify the persistence of M. Thiers—the law of the 26th of July, 1872, established fresh duties upon 538 articles, "the Government had originally proposed duties of 10 to 20 per cent. repayable upon exportation; the budget Commission of 1871 had reduced them to 3 per cent. without return on exportation. The National Assembly adopted a mixed system; on certain articles the law of the 26th of July, 1872, placed high duties with a drawback: other articles, the more numerous, were subjected to low duties not repayable on exportation."[1]

[1] Mathieu Bodet, *Les Finances Françaises de* 1870 *à* 1878, t. i. p. 147.

The ninety-three millions which this resource was to produce according to the very optimistic anticipations of the Government were entered in the receipts for 1873.

Completed by a certain number of new measures and laws which were debated and voted in the autumn session and before the 1st of January, 1873, this budget appeared then to be balanced; it even secured the necessary resources to guarantee the great loan which was going to be issued. All these accounts, it must certainly be admitted, were partly fictitious. They were tabulated on the anticipations of receipts whose realization was by no means assured. But other action was impossible. Progress could only be made by feeling the way. The good faith and good will of the Government, the country, and the Assembly were indispensable. All advanced under the same impulse towards the same objective, which drew nearer every day, through the loan to the payment, through the payment to liberation.

Terms of Payment of the Indemnity

The Convention of the 29th of June, 1872, contained the following clauses: France undertook to pay in four terms: (1) one half milliard of francs two months after the ratification of the Convention by the National Assembly; one milliard on the 1st of February, 1873; (2) one half milliard on the 1st of March, 1874, and one milliard on the 1st of March, 1875.

On the other hand, Germany undertook to evacuate the two Departments of the Marne and Haute-Marne fifteen days after the payment of one half milliard; the Departments of the Ardennes and the Vosges fifteen days after the payment of the second milliard; lastly, the Departments of the

Meuse, of Meurthe-et-Moselle, as well as the district of Belfort, fifteen days after the payment of the third milliard, and the interest.

The French Government had only one desire: to hasten the measure which should deliver our eastern Departments. A universal wail arose from the whole territory under invasion. It might always be feared that some unforeseen incident might put everything again in question.

So then it was necessary to appeal again to credit; it was decided to ask the public for the necessary three milliards (£120,000,000) in one single application. Never had so vast a financial operation been attempted and this operation was doubled with another no less important: that of the immense displacement of money caused by this sum which was to be transported from private safes into those of the French treasury, and from these into the deposits of the German State, without provoking a financial or monetary crisis which would have compromised the general working of this prodigious movement.

The preparation and launching of so powerful an apparatus demanded calculations at once vast and minute, foreseeing all the details and even leaving a certain room for the unexpected.

The whole machinery was set in motion on the 11th of July, 1872, by the action of M. de Goulard, Minister of Finance, in depositing at the "Bureau" of the Assembly the Bill authorizing the Government "to enter upon the great book of the public debt and to alienate the sum of annuities at 5 per cent., necessary to produce a capital of three milliards." In this figure were not included the sums destined to pay for the interest due in 1872 and 1873, and

to cover the material expenses of the operation. The total concerned then was three and a half milliards (to be exact, 3,498,744,639 francs).

The Bill was passed in the sitting of the 15th of July. For the forms and methods of raising the loan the Assembly placed itself in the hands of the Government; it was unwilling to disturb the enormous work, which was being accomplished, by the smallest interference. It did not even accept a proposal from M. Germain which indicated a singular confidence in the credit of France, and the wealth of private individuals, and whose object was to grant freedom from subsequent conversion to every subscriber who should effect the complete payment of the sum subscribed in one single instalment.

This amendment would have had the effect of baffling speculation. And in fact the reproach which can be urged against the loan of three milliards such as it was conceived and realized by M. Thiers and his ministers is, that it called into play and invited to its profits the speculation of the whole world.

A decree and a resolution of the 20th of July, 1872, determined the conditions of the loan: it was issued by the method of public subscription at the price of 84½; the subscription was to take place on the 28th of July; payment was made by an instalment of 14·50 for five francs of interest at the moment of distribution and twenty monthly payments of which the last was to be completed on the 11th of April, 1874.

The total sum demanded of the public being 3 milliards 498 millions, the interest entered in the Great Account being 207 millions, the nominal

debt which France subscribed was 4 milliards 140 millions. The rate of interest to which the loan came was 5·91 per cent. The expenses of the issue and of the operation itself have been estimated at 145 millions of francs, so that when everything has been taken into account the rate of interest is not less than 6·17 per cent.

Under these conditions, success was assured. It was colossal. The loan was subscribed more than thirteen times. The number of subscribers was 934,276. The subscriptions amounted to 2 milliards 592,000 francs in *interest*, and to 43 milliards 900 millions in capital. The State of France refused 40 milliards; the 3 milliards 500 millions were paid, of course, either in advance in important sums, or on the terms agreed, without the least difficulty. The day but one after the issue the loan advanced by four points and the discharged loan was even more in demand than the undischarged loan, so evident was it that money abounded and that the credit of France was unimpaired.

Taking the whole of the subscription, the share of the foreigner was slightly in excess of the figure of the subscription from France.

When M. de Goulard came with much simplicity to make the return of his figures to the Assembly, there was a universal outbreak of joy. It seemed that France felt herself delivered from the incubus of war, and had escaped the fatality which had been weighing on her for two years. There was a kind of explosion which gave a people, as ready to hope as to despair, a fresh impetus and a firm confidence in the future.

The art of M. Thiers had had much to do with obtaining this success. Quoting a phrase from

Bossuet, he said that he had taken from fortune all that could be taken from her by *counsel*; he should have added *by money*. The loan might have been issued at a much higher price, perhaps at 87, perhaps at 89; the profit of the subscription might have been restricted to French subscribers only by leaving less latitude to the conditions of payment, or by securing, as M. Germain wished, inconvertibility to the subscribers who should proceed immediately to complete payment.

In adopting the very advantageous conditions for the bankers, which were determined by the decree of the 20th of July, the Government took upon itself to grant a very high premium to speculation, notably to foreign speculation (for the loan quickly returned to place itself in France) and to add a perceptible extra charge to the burden which was going to weigh upon the French tax-payer; even while taking account, from this last point of view, of the eventual resource of conversion, it is none the less true that if the operation in its general aspect was brilliant, it was also burdensome.

M. Thiers and his Government could meet these objections in one word: before everything it was necessary to succeed; before everything it was necessary to avoid a financial crisis; before everything it was necessary to avoid compromising the operation by limiting its base; it being so vast, so bold, so uncertain and so novel, the assistance not only of the capital, but of the credit and confidence of the whole world was not too much to ask.

Moreover, the subscription of the loan was only the first part of the business. The mobilization of the capital and its march towards Germany presented no less a difficulty: "Such a fact, as M. Léon Say

has said, " only becomes in any degree probable by its realization." For a moment it was possible to fear that the apprehensions which had been felt might be realized; in January, 1872, the reserve of the Bank of France had fallen to 630 millions. Happily on this side two precautions were taken. The same law which had authorised the loan had raised the limit of issue of bank notes from 2,300,000,000 to 3,200,000,000. Thus the reserve quickly resumed an upward movement, and by the 18th of December, 1872, had reached 790 millions.

From the point of view of the payments to be effected, M. Thiers had also taken the most minute precautions. On the 27th of July, the day before the subscription of the loan, he signed a contract by which fifty-five of the most important banking houses in Europe guaranteed the subscription of the loan, and further pledged themselves to put at the disposal of the French Government 700 millions of coin for the payments to be made to Germany. The two operations, loan and payment, were thus intimately joined. The international financial world thus had an interest in helping the work of liberation. The banking houses of all important places became beaters-up of bills of exchange on behalf of France, and propagators of her credit.

M. Thiers created, as we have said, special agencies in London, at Brussels, at Amsterdam, at Hamburg, at Frankfort, at Berlin; everywhere an immense traffic in papers went on in the name of France; enormous expenses and almost insurmountable difficulties were thus avoided. The London agency alone, directed by M. de Maintenant, often had in its portfolio 150 millions and even more.

To give some idea of the complexity of the work which was thus accomplished in less than twenty-six months, and amounted to the total of 5 milliards 315 millions, it is well to cast a glance upon the figure of the values of all kinds which were gathered together by the whole of Europe to produce the total of the ransom. Here it is, according to the official documents :

DENOMINATION	AMOUNT
Notes of the Bank of France, Fr. . . .	125,000,000
French gold	273,003,058 10
French silver	239,291,875 75
German coin and banknotes	105,039,145 18
Thalers	2,485,313,721 04
Florins of Frankfort	235,128,152 79
Marcs banco	265,216,990 40
Reichsmarcs	79,072,309 89
Florins of Holland	250,540,821 46
Francs of Belgium	295,704,546 40
Pounds sterling	637,349,832 28
Total . . Fr.	4,990,660,453·29

To get the sum total of 5,315,000,058·29 francs remitted to Germany by the French Treasury it is necessary to take into account the balance established by the cession of the Eastern railways of Alsace-Lorraine, of a claim of the City of Paris, admitted by Prussia, of the expenses of discount on effects not yet fallen in, of losses on realization, on the expenses of the negotiation of values and of consignments to the German Government in foreign paper.

Let us note that the figures published in Germany raise the amount of the sums received from France to 5,567,067,277·50 francs. The difference is explained by the contribution of war imposed on many towns, including Paris. (Law of May 25, 1872, upon the assignment made by Germany of the amount of the war indemnity paid by France.) Let us further note that a memoir presented to the Reichstag in the Session of 1872, fixed at 378,704,499 thalers the expenses occasioned by the war to Prussia, and her allies of Southern Germany.

It was necessary to recall these figures in spite of their dryness. Let every French citizen always keep before his eyes the sum of the debt which under different forms was contracted by France for the extraordinary expenses of the war, from 1870 to 1872:

Ten milliards five hundred and fifty millions! (*four hundred and twenty-two million pounds sterling*). Such is the burden which, merely on the side of the loans, the consequence of the war of 1870, weighs upon the fortune of France, upon the liberty of France, upon the fortune, upon the independence of each citizen.

And in the course of thirty years this debt has not been lightened; on the contrary, the successive conversions have further increased the capital. *The war-debt is not being settled.* In spite of growing wealth, the generation which saw the war, and the generations which have succeeded one another, transfer the burden with the duty of discharging it, to their successors.

We were very proud in 1871 and 1872 of the success of the two loans: we might be prouder still if, after the lapse of thirty years, they were paid back.

IV

Position of M. Thiers in August, 1872

During this laborious session of April to August, 1872, the situation of M. Thiers had been at once very lofty and very perilous. In the same month he rendered three great services simultaneously: the passing of the Army Bill, the Convention for evacuation, the Liberation loan.

Over and above this he guided the Assembly and devoted himself with a juvenile ardour to the thankless task of parliamentary work. He was wise enough to recognize the current which was bearing the country towards Republican institutions, and he prudently followed it. Often he was right against all the world; but, often too, it happened to him to abuse his insight, his authority, even his services. "He thinks that he alone is capable of administering, governing, and explaining his Government." He entrenched himself in this formula, "The Conservative Republic," and he hardly got beyond it.

If he has merits, exceptional merits, he has also his moments of weakness, his obstinacies, his too visibly personal and egoistic skilfulness. He made a mistake on the Bill on raw materials; he was obliged to yield in the debate on the Army Bill. And then he always had in his mouth the word resignation; it was a bit of play at the outset, but in the end it became dangerous. Men began to ask themselves if he would not really go off one fine day in a fit of temper leaving everything unfinished; he did, in truth, think himself a little too indispensable. He showed it too much. Superiorities, which are too evident, and above all too exacting, are not loved. Furthermore, if pretexts were wanted, it was always permissible to say that a country needs an assured to-morrow.

M. Thiers was robust, vigorous, indefatigable certainly, but he was old, and at the mercy of a draught. He sometimes played at being the sick man; sometimes, too, he really was so, his complexion yellow, his eyes colourless. If he happened to die! He put this hypothesis on one side himself.

He said that the country was "thierist." He asked himself what inconvenience there could possibly be, if France continued to live "under the dictatorship of capacity." The resistance of the Assembly appeared to him very "dense."

This resistance was sometimes well founded. In proportion as the past disappeared and was effaced, preoccupation for the future became more insistent. Not only were interests and ambitions on the look out, but convictions, patriotism, were on guard. It was impossible to live indefinitely without any other shelter than that of the formulas successively invented and substituted for one another by the fertile skill of M. Thiers: Bordeaux Compact, Loyal Experiment, Conservative Republic.

The Republicans well understood that this last phrase really meant the Republic without any epithet, and Gambetta cried out noisily: "No, gentlemen, there are not two Republics, there is only one. These words are merely temporary."

But the Monarchists also knew only too much. "Tartuffe," said one of them, "is the name given to-day to a Conservative Republican." Thus then they were led with hands bound and eyes bandaged to the definitive Republic by the winding way of the provisional arrangement which M. Thiers so complacently prolonged.

It is necessary to indicate the reasons which induced many fine minds, honest souls, and enlightened intelligences to stop on the slope to which they were drawn by the ardent and personal optimism of M. Thiers, urged on by the more and more clearly expressed will of the country. "I have no fixed prejudice against the Republic," said one of them at this time; "I have even been a Republican

myself in my day; I know that in the significance of this word (*res publica*) there is a powerful attraction; but the voice of common sense," added he, "cries to me every day more loudly that we are not virtuous enough, nor sufficiently submissive to the divine law, nor disinterested enough, nor moderate enough, to keep in its purity the theory of Government, which, in principle, ought to give the power to the worthiest, which in practice will always hand it over to the noisiest and the most audacious. . . . How can we fail to remark," further said this Monarchist, "that the Republic, always enthroned by the strong arm; has never been able to maintain itself for any length of time except by the dictatorship? How can we not see that it is its impotence to give order, to assure all interests, which has always made it end by fatality in despotism? How can we not remember that the triumph of the Republic has always been the signal for insulting or persecuting religious faith? So that all those who love liberty and order, those who place the salvation of their souls above everything else, ought to turn away from the seductive aspects of the Republic as from a dangerous mirage."[1]

This appreciation was full of passion, but it was honest. It was dictated, as was all the conduct which resulted from it, by a religious faith, ardent and exclusive. The Marquis de Dampierre, who held this language, was reckoned on the whole among the reasonable men the "politicians" of the party. He knew how to hold his own against his "King." Animated by similar convictions, the whole party whom he represented, and in whose

[1] Marquis de Dampierre, *Cinq années de vie politique.*

name he was the spokesman on more than one decisive occasion, devoted itself with a desperate obstinacy to the restoration of the monarchical system.

The Republicans

Wills no less honest, no less keen, struggled to snatch the Republic from its provisional position in order to found it definitively. In the eyes of those who shared these opinions the Republic was the political form to which France was culminating by the natural evolution of centuries. The people wished to govern itself. It was capable of doing so. Why delay the period at which it should assume responsibility for its actions and the direction of its destinies? The evolution was proceeding in the wisest intellects, long undecided, so much did the sense of the irksomeness of uncertainty begin to spread. The Left Centre gained more and more numerous recruits. These new partisans of the Republic considered that the Monarchy being impossible by reason of circumstances, and in consequence even of the will of the Princes, the wisest course was to take a line and to organize Republican institutions without allowing one's hand to be forced either by events or by the country.

At the bottom there was not absolute certainty of the sovereign powers of the Assembly. Gambetta's campaign shook even his adversaries. As M. de Meaux says very justly, an ambiguity was in existence in men's minds: "We had been nominated above all to make peace, the dread of the war had determined our election. . . . We did not take into account that the disposition of the country had changed."

At the opening of the session the Left Centre had

decided that the hour had come to make a declaration. Through the respected agency of General Chanzy it had formulated an unreserved adhesion to Republican institutions. Appointed president of the group, he said on the 12th of May: "I did not enjoy, as you did, the privilege of coming to the Assembly with a ready-made political faith. . . . Nothing compelled me at the outset to advertise ideas which I could not hold seriously, to declare myself one of a party which I could not really know. I was obliged to wait till a conviction settled my resolve. I had been struck at the very beginning by the fact that no one of the parties which dream of the restoration of the past had dared to attempt it at the only opportune moment: that in which the representatives of the country assembled at Bordeaux found themselves, in the presence of the difficulties, the dangers even of the terrible situation then existing. . . . It did not seem to me either admissible or equitable to leave to the Republic the heavy burden of those great measures, while preventing it from showing what it can do for the country. . . . Who can deny, before having honestly made the experiment, that the way of salvation is not by the Republican formula? . . . Let us then frankly accept the Republic in essence and in form, because we all feel that under the present conditions of France it is the only possible form of Government, and that the provisional Government would be feebleness and impotence at a time when we have to will and to guide. . . ."

These grave and honest words had an immense echo in the country.

Also, every time that universal suffrage was consulted, it confirmed the votes which had succeeded

one another since the peace; at elections the Monarchists rarely ventured any longer to unfurl their flag. On the 9th of June, 1872, bye-elections took place in the Departments of the North, the Somme, the Yonne and Corsica. This last Department re-elected M. Abbatucci, who had surrendered his first seat to make room for M. Rouher. The three other Departments elected Radicals: M. Barni, M. Dérégnaucourt, who had been invalided, and M. Paul Bert. This last name appeared full of terror to the Right and the Catholic party. The repeated successes of the Bonapartists were not less disturbing: "That is what comes of not proclaiming the Republic; the Empire will come back," said some. "See what it costs not to restore the throne, the Empire is established," cried others.

Out of this combination of impressions was born in the minds of certain members of the Right a new idea, which marked a first and very timorous step in the direction of accepting the facts.

In order to parry the dangers of Radicalism what was called "a conjunction of the Centres" was attempted. There was a thought of forming a great Conservative Liberal party which should support M. Thiers, hold him in when necessary, and, by offering him the glittering prospect of a stable majority, detach him completely from the Left. In this programme there was resignation, wisdom, and a dash of Machiavelli.

Penetrated by the impotence to which it was condemned by its isolation, and repelled from the Right by the ultramontane manifestations, by the failure of the attempts at fusion, by the affirmation of the white flag, the Right Centre sought to approach the Left Centre.

The enterprise had been concerted between M. Saint-Marc-Girardin, president of the Right Centre, and the Duc de Broglie, who had resigned his position as Ambassador of France in London, in order to take the direction of the policy of the Right in the National Assembly.[1]

The Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier undertook to negotiate the conditions of the projected alliance with General Chanzy, president of the Left Centre. He set forth that the policy of M. Thiers was not sufficiently Conservative, that its want of firmness added strength to Radical ideas; if the two groups united, they would get from the Government an accentuation of its policy in the Conservative direction.

General Chanzy was very categorical in his reply: "If the Right Centre," said he, "is resolved, without any secret thought, to support the Government of the Republic, and to work for its establishment in the country, the Left Centre will ask for nothing better than to give its support to a Conservative campaign against the Radicals. If on the contrary Monarchical hopes are not definitively abandoned, our support cannot be reckoned upon."

The fertile imagination of the politicians of the Right Centre was not discouraged. Repulsed by the Left Centre, it renewed its experiments in the quarter of the Right pure. There was to be no longer any talk of the cause of division, that is to say of plans for the Monarchical restoration, but only of what made for union, that is to say, Conservative principles. The interests of "the great Conservative

[1] The Duc de Broglie had presented his letters of recall to Queen Victoria on the 7th of May, 1872.

party" were entrusted to a deputation composed of MM. d'Audiffret-Pasquier, Saint-Marc-Girardin, de Broglie, Batbie, Depeyre, de Kerdrel, de Cumont, and de la Rochefoucauld. General Changarnier benevolently joined this "staff," which was called the "Council of Nine." It revealed its emotion at the Radical elections of the 9th of June, at the second threat of sending in his resignation made by M. Thiers on the 10th of June in connection with the debate on the Army Bill.

After having examined the proposal, made by M. d'Haussonville in a letter to the *Journal des Débats* to interpellate the Government before the Assembly, the Council of Nine decided to make a solemn application to M. Thiers. The cape of the Army Bill had just been doubled. The Convention with Germany was on the point of being signed. The hour was favourable. It was decided to summon M. Thiers and to notify to him a kind of ultimatum in the name of the majority.

On the 20th of June, 1872, the "Council of Nine" betook itself to the Hôtel de la Préfecture at Versailles, the official residence of the President of the Republic. M. Thiers, who was receiving a deputation from the members of the National Protestant Synod made the Delegates of the Right wait for some considerable time: at last they were introduced. M. Thiers received them with affability, invited his "old and distinguished friend" General Changarnier to a place by his side, and inquired with interest, what was the object of the visit of his "dear friends."

General Changarnier was the first to speak. He spoke in "honeyed tones." He said that he and his friends were full of deference to M. Thiers. He

reminded him that they were his oldest friends; his name was borne upon their lips when twenty-six Departments elected him on the 8th of February, 1871. Relying now upon these old sympathies they had come to the President to lay before him their anxieties as to what concerned the future of the country; Radicalism was making such progress that its approaching triumph might be feared.

What is the cause of the mischief? The want of unity in the guidance of the Government. Up to now we have been living upon a confusion, which cannot be continued much longer. We rest on the support of all parties; accordingly all are cajoled. The Ministry is not homogeneous; the administration obeys impulses from different quarters; lastly, M. Thiers, contrary to the Bordeaux compact, marks his preference for the Republic.

In conclusion the Delegates, who spoke in succession, conjure the President of the Republic to rely upon the majority represented by themselves, and to form a ministry in alliance with it resolved to fight Radicalism to the last breath.

M. Thiers listened to the sorrows of the Delegates with the deepest attention, his hands resting on his knees, his eyes half-closed, and turned towards the carpet; at the moment of replying he gently raised his head, smiled, and first of all expressed his amazement that he should be accused of being disloyal to his Conservative mission. He was more Conservative than ever, "more Conservative than the majority of the Assembly," and he recalled the fact that the Ministry, though formed of Republicans and Monarchists, triumphed over the Commune. He further asked himself where he would find a compact majority to support a homogeneous Ministry.

If he consulted the votes of the Assembly he ascertained disunion latent behind projected or ephemeral coalitions.

The Duc de Broglie had complained with some bitterness of the recent Republican elections, and of the conduct of the prefects. M. Thiers declared plainly that having accepted the deposit of the Republic, and wishing to guard it faithfully he had not the right to oppose Republican elections. " My answer, precise, plain, and determined, without asperity, closed, he says, " the mouth of the Duc de Broglie, who then adopted an attitude of affected coldness." [1]

Speaking of the future M. Thiers called to mind that he had perfectly understood at Bordeaux that the choice of a definitive form of government was to be postponed. However everybody recognizes, he added, that it will soon be necessary to give up this abnegation. Can it be thought mischievous, that out of foresight he allows the solution to be known, which the practical experience of his power makes him consider to be henceforth irresistible ? The more he studies French society the more he is persuaded that the monarchy is impossible. Its collapse comes from the irremediable division of its partisans. And then the country knows nothing of it, and turns away from it. It is quite necessary to accept the Republic as legal, and, besides, it already exists in fact.

" Let us," he said, " by some wise laws confide the legislative power to two Chambers ; let us give the Upper Chamber and the Executive Power the right of dissolving, in common accord, the Chamber of

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 317.

Deputies, let us, lastly, make an electoral law guaranteeing universal suffrage, as far as possible, against its own impulses, and, under these conditions, I feel sure that the Government would be sufficiently armed to resist the worst enterprises of demagogy."

So far as the Radicals were concerned, M. Thiers reproved their principles and their campaign. He blamed in particular the attacks of M. Gambetta upon the Assembly. But if the country voted for this party, the reason was that it wished to mark its wish to found the Republic, and that no means of doing so were left to it, except to give its votes to those candidates who alone affirmed their devotion to the existing institutions.

M. Thiers only committed himself to one opinion. In his eyes the Assembly is Sovereign. It can, if it thinks good, proclaim the Monarchy, and addressing himself to the Delegates he delivers this last direct thrust: "Since you are the majority, why do you not yourselves propose its re-establishment?"

The interview came to an end; it had lasted two hours and a half. M. Thiers, in showing the Delegates out, said to them with a smile: "Well! well! the Republic is one of those things that the Empire has bequeathed to us, with so many others."

M. Thiers had given way once again to the natural temptation to sparkle.

The Council of Nine communicated a statement of its procedure to the Press; it ended with these words: "Regretting not to be able to come to an understanding with the President of the Republic as to the veritable conditions of the Conservative Republic, the delegates have been obliged to retire maintaining their opinion, and reserving to themselves every liberty to defend it."

It was a declaration of war.

It was inevitable. For a long time agreement between M. Thiers and the members of the majority had been impossible. The equivocation which all shared in the phrase "Conservative Republic" could not last longer. From the moment when M. Thiers refused to play with wilful blindness the part of a monk, it was better to break frankly with him.

Since the return of M. de Broglie the campaign had been assuming a movement in which a master's hand was felt. Further, the latter said in the lobbies of the Assembly the day after the interview with the President: "We must interpellate him on everything, heckle him on everything, so that he may not be able to resist."

The Manifestation of the "Bonnets à Poil"

The conference between M. Thiers and the Council of Nine did not impassion public opinion. On the following day a clever article by M. John Lemoine in the *Journal des Débats* rallied the manifestation of the "*Bonnets à Poil* (Old Guard)." The phrase ran through Paris and afforded amusement at the expense of the authors of the step. In France wit gains these light victories to the advantage of common sense. The *Journal des Débats*, which was waiting for the hour of its evolution, made it on that day, and rallied to the Left Centre, whose programme was sketched by M. de Laboulaye in an article inserted by the side of that of M. John Lemoine.

M. de Larcy, Minister of Public Works, who represented the Legitimist party in the Cabinet, was unwilling to separate from the Right, and sent in his resignation.

The positions were taken up. The majority was about to seek every opportunity for turning out M.

Thiers ; it was not to allow a single one of affirming its violent hostility to the Republic to pass. M. Thiers, on the contrary, rested plainly on the Left. He braved the Right and seemed to take a pleasure in advertising " the loyal experiment " of the Republican Government.

Starting from this time the discussions are tumultuous, violent, the sittings without confidence, without repose. On the 12th of July, a little before the separation of the Assembly, M. Thiers seized an opportunity, in the course of a business debate, once more to fling in the face of the majority the affirmation of the Republic, " of the Conservative Republic, of course."

In the tone of the statesman we perceive a fixed resolution, when he cries in the midst of general emotion : " Gentlemen, *you have given us a form of Government which is called the Republic,* but it is the Conservative Republic." It was impossible to utter truths more disagreeable to a majority. Evidently M. Thiers had taken his line. He knew where he was going.

This fresh manifestation deeply irritated the Right. Some hotheads even thought of trying to realize their plans for a restoration immediately. These rumours, exaggerated in the conversations of the lobbies gave rise to a talk of a " monarchical conspiracy," in which the name of Marshal MacMahon, and that of the Duchess of Magenta were mixed. The arguments soon became so hot that the Government thought it ought to contradict these alleged plans of conspiracy, while the Marshal and his wife, by an ostentatious visit to the Hôtel de la Préfecture, showed their real sentiments towards the person of M. Thiers.

The last sittings of the session were devoted to the

discussion of the contracts of the 4th of September. Violent speeches, vehement incriminations were made. On the 29th of July, the day after the success of the three milliard loan, on the eve of the day on which M. de Goulard came to announce that unhoped for result to the Assembly, and to do honour for it to "the Conservative Republic," there was a furious and unparalleled fight on the subject of M. Riant's report on the contracts passed by the Government of National Defence. The Left had been obliged to withdraw from the sitting, and the Right to vote alone the order of the day demanding the dismissal of the Minister "who implied a censure."

It was remarked that M. Grévy, feeling himself powerless to direct the debates, had quitted the chair, and left the Presidency of the Assembly to M. Martel.

Return to the Bordeaux Compact.

The session was touching its end, that over-burdened session, in which M. Thiers had rendered such great services, and which had seen such great things. On both sides it was understood that the line had been crossed, and that the country could not be left with impressions of this nature during the parliamentary holidays. Furthermore a truce was quite necessary, since the hour for definitive resolutions was forcibly put back. The great operation of the payment of the indemnity and of the evacuation was imminent. It would have been a piece of signal folly to disturb it by the unmodified recollection of the last parliamentary struggles.

Accordingly M. Martel, the conciliatory, had deposed at the Bureau of the Assembly a motion for prorogation from the 4th of August, 1872, to the 11th of November following. M. Saint-Marc Girardin was charged with presenting the report on this proposal;

he did so on the 1st of August, and he took advantage of this circumstance to give a more favourable interpretation to the recent proceedings with M. Thiers.

His declaration was received with covered smiles. Practically a return was made to the Bordeaux Compact. The old arsenal of worn-out formulas still served for the holiday time. But every one was preparing fresh tactics and more dangerous weapons for the decisive struggle of the re-opening of the Assembly.

V

Situation of the Country

In the country, during the months of holiday which followed this agitated session, the same dispositions again are rife, the same passions, the same anxieties, the same work as in the Government and the Assembly. Meanwhile, the resumption of business, an unexpected prosperity, a fulness of life and a kind of exuberance which often follow great cataclysms, spread universal confidence. For the first time the pleasures of summer again found their light and luxurious votaries. The seaside resorts were invaded. Costumes dulled for a moment under the influence of the war resumed their brilliancy. M. Thiers betook himself to Trouville, where he remained till the 19th of September. There he was surrounded, much laudated: the season was at its height.

Always preoccupied with military questions and exhibiting a kind of affectation of entering into their minutest details, he devoted his leisure to the reconstitution of the armament: "As for the rifle, he says,

I left to General Douai, creator of the School of Musketry at Vincennes, the care of correcting its defects." But he concerned himself in person with the experiments conducted by General Frébault and Colonel Reffye, who brought about the introduction of breech-loading into our artillery, and the substitution of steel for bronze in the manufacture of guns.

He visited Havre, where he received an enthusiastic welcome. Everywhere on his passing cries arose of, "Vive la République!" An act of homage still more important for him and for the country was paid to him: a detachment from the English Channel Fleet left its anchorage at Spithead, came to salute the Head of a friendly and neighbouring State, and escorted him on his journey by sea from Trouville to Havre.

The Government, during this period of calm, applied itself to maintaining order, and giving pledges to the Conservative party. Strikes, which broke out in the north, were repressed with singular energy; public political manifestations were forbidden. The Left was unable to celebrate, as it had intended, the anniversaries of the fall of the Bastille in 1789, of the 4th of September, 1870, and of the 22nd of September, 1792. A meeting was to have taken place at Marseilles at which M. Louis Blanc was to be the speaker: it had not been able to be carried out, and M. Louis Blanc was reduced to publishing in the form of a letter the oration in which he demanded the immediate dissolution of the Assembly.

Meanwhile M. Gambetta makes his voice heard. Everywhere 'private' meetings are organized at which he speaks. Each of his speeches, spread

abroad by the press, is an event; they give a definite direction to wavering minds; in the silence their sound is so much the louder. They set forth a doctrine, develop a programme, constitute a party, overwhelm dumb opponents, stir up the undecided. When a man is thus in evidence as master of the future, he is conquering it in fact. The Republican party alone addresses the public and acts in full daylight. Since the Crusades France had never witnessed such a propaganda of words. She loves to give herself to him who gives himself in this way.

On the 14th of July M. Gambetta had begun the series of his speeches at la Ferté-sous-Jouarre; there he pronounced the words which carried beyond the political world, and were destined to move the deep masses of the country: "We must return to the fertile idea of 1789, re-establish the group which has been destroyed by criminal hands; unite the tradesman with the artizan, the artizan with the peasant." Or again: "Let your fields, your evenings of work in your meetings, your fairs, become occasions of exchange of thoughts and of instruction for you." Frank words, keen and direct, which sound the alarm for the French democracy, and organize it by forming its groups.

The campaign that he undertook subsequently in Dauphiné has remained famous; there he found himself in contact with the strong and sturdy populations which saw the dawn of the Revolution. At Albertville he again brought his indictment against the Assembly: "The true polity is vigilance, patience; and, after all, we have not long to wait, for it is certain that this Chamber has reached the

last degrees of unpopularity, impotence, sterility, and incapacity."

At Grenoble, on the 26th of September, he challenged attention by proclaiming to the applause of some, the surprise of others, the advent of democracy in politics.

What will you have? he said: In certain classes of society in France men have been unable for the last forty-five years to take their line not only from the French Revolution, but from its consequences, its results. They are unwilling to make the confession that the monarchy is done with, that all systems, which can under different modifications represent monarchy, are equally condemned. And it is in this want of resolution, of courage in a notable portion of the French middle class, that I discover the origin, the explanation, of all our misfortunes, of all our failures, of all the uncertainty, indecisions and unwholesomeness that still prevail in the politics of the day.

One asks oneself, in truth, whence can such obstinacy be derived; one asks oneself if these men have really reflected on what is going on; one asks oneself how it is that they are not aware of the errors that they are committing, and how they can any longer preserve in good faith the ideas on which they claim to rest; how they shut their eyes to a spectacle which ought to smite them?

Have they not seen since the fall of the Empire the appearance of a new generation, ardent although self-controlled, intelligent, ready for affairs, impassioned for justice, careful of the common rights? Have they not seen appearing over the whole surface of the country—and I insist with all my strength on setting this new generation of the democracy in strong relief—a new political and electoral personality, a new personality of universal suffrage? Have they not seen the workers of the towns, and the fields, that world of labour to which the future belongs, enter upon political affairs?

Yes! I foresee, I feel, I announce the advent and the presence in the political world of a new social stratum which has been at work for very nearly eighteen months, and is far, I am sure of it, from being inferior to its predecessors.

At the same time, understanding the danger of enclosing the Republic in a too narrow organization,

persuaded, as he was all his life, that the Republic is the concern of every man, he defined in precise terms the conciliatory and tolerant policy which he recommended to his party.

The Republican party—that which is composed above all of men often and severely tried, that which numbers in its ranks almost as many victims as workers, that is the party of which I am speaking, because it is the one that I know best and is the party to which I belong—the Republican party which has always been so, or which only numbers members who have always been so, that party is bound to much breadth in action, to a great spirit of conciliation and concord; it is bound to recruit widely and without narrow selfish calculations in all classes in the country in order to become the majority of the nation itself. This is its immediate duty, and it will not fail in that duty.

This party must, however, have a certain criterion at its disposal: it should be able to distinguish between the simpleness of some and the self-seeking of others, between the new-comers who offer themselves and the old hands, between those who come and bring their aid as the result of recent convictions, and those who have actions to put behind their words; it should, lastly, be able to be in a position also to recognize those who, shaking off an indifference, alas! too common, wish to enter political life. These men, gentlemen, should be welcomed with open arms. . . .

In the course of this campaign M. Gambetta always showed consideration for the person of M. Thiers. At Annecy he eagerly seized the opportunity which was offered him to pronounce a panegyric upon the President of the Republic:

"I have been for my own part," he said, "actually sensible of the honour which has been done to me in associating my name with the eminent man who will have the credit, so rare in France, of subordinating his previous convictions to the necessities of the country and the law of events.

"In the name of order, of legal authority, of sound respect for Republican forms, and also, permit me to say so, in the name of the services rendered to France by that experienced

old man so full of resources, so familiar with the difficulties of politics, so astounding in his zeal and activity for the public weal, so quick to seize the indications of public opinion, so sagacious in the means which he proposes for the solution of the difficulties which present themselves; and also in the name of the memorable things which the President of the Republic has accomplished already, and by the aid of which he has been able to serve the general interests of the country so well, if only by deriving inspiration from the national will as though by a kind of intuition entirely personal, and better still, for example, —you will forgive what I am going to say to you,—than if he had listened too much to the voice which is heard in the Department of the Seine-et-Oise!—for all these combined reasons, gentlemen, I am only too happy to drink to the Republic first of all, and then to its President."

At Saint-Julien on the 20th of October M. Gambetta inaugurated the campaign of principles which he was soon about to guide with so much vigour against the clerical intrigues:

"There is no longer any occasion for talking of monarchical parties," he said. "There remains a party that you know well, a party which is the enemy of all independence, of all enlightenment and of all stability, for this party is the declared enemy of all that is wholesome, of all that is beneficent in the organization of modern societies. It is the enemy . . . you have named it: it is 'clericalism.'"

But, on the other hand, he showed himself no less vigilant for the defence of the national cause. A certain separatist sentiment had shown itself in these districts. On the 30th of September, 1872, in a speech delivered at Bonneville, M. François Dumont, grandson of the President of the Assembly of the "Allobroges," which voted for the union of Savoy with France in 1792 had pronounced these grave words:

"We are not," said M. Dumont, "exactly like our fathers, who loved France before the Republic. We love the Republic before France."

At the dinner at which Gambetta was present, M. Dubouloz had thought right to insist:

"If, as the result of not altogether probable events," he had said, "a disposition was shown to make a fresh experiment in Monarchy, oh! then we should remember that close to us there is a little country which has known how to win great liberties, and which means the support of republican institutions. We should then have a memory, because wherever there is liberty, there should be a fatherland."

Gambetta did not let such words fall unnoticed. He immediately caught them up in a fine burst of frankness and eloquence:

"When we speak of France," he said, "of what belongs to her, of what is her good, her integrity, we must weigh our words carefully. Do you think that France is to be rendered responsible from the point of view of her unity, from the point of view of that magnificent assemblage of provinces, which together form, all with distinctive features, the grand figure of the fatherland, do you think that she is to be tried by this last disaster to the extent of falling into voluntary dismemberment and dislocation? We must reflect when we speak of the patrimony of France. . . . Where there is France, there is the fatherland."

The Populations of Alsace and Lorraine.

At the very time when these words were pronounced a sad event painfully revived the patriotic feeling of the nation. The German Government announced officially that after the 1st of October, 1872, all Frenchmen born or domiciled in Alsace-Lorraine who should not have expressed their option for France would be considered German subjects; that all

inhabitants of the annexed territories who should be found after that date on the territory of Alsace-Lorraine, even after having expressed their option for French nationality in the regular form, would be deprived of the benefits of option. According to the instructions sent to the head of each division, option was to be followed by an actual change of domicile.

So the separation was accomplished.

On the one side, in France, the law of the 7th of September, 1871, had added to the Department of the Meurthe the territories of the Department of the Moselle, which had remained French, that is to say the district of Briey, less some communes of the cantons of Briey and Conflans. Thus increased, the former Department of the Meurthe took, "provisionally," says the text of the law, the name of Meurthe-et-Moselle.

On the other side the territories which had become German in consequence of the treaty of Frankfort had been organized as "lands of the Empire," *Reichsland*, by virtue of a law dated the 9th of June, 1871. By the terms of this law Alsace-Lorraine was directly attached to the Imperial power, and administered by the Emperor in the name of the Confederation. It was to have representatives in the Reichstag, but the use of this right, at first postponed to the 1st of January 1873 was only exercised from the beginning of January, 1874. Alsace-Lorraine had fifteen deputies to elect.

Bismark's Declaration

At the time of the debate on the law Bismarck had informed the Reichstag of his plans in relation to Alsace-Lorraine. In a speech on the 2nd of May, 1871, he first recalled the fact that Germany had not been able to content

herself, as had been proposed, with imposing upon France the dismantling of the fortresses of Alsace and Lorraine. "To constitute," he said, "a condition of servitude upon foreign policy and soil, is to create a very heavy burden, very annoying to the sentiments of sovereignty and independence of the country upon which it weighs." He then explained that by reason of "the repugnance of the inhabitants themselves to their separation from France" the Empire had consented to "make of these two provinces a neutral state, like Switzerland and Belgium."

In another speech, delivered on the 25th of May, on the same subject, he was precise: "The only question, beside that one, which could seriously be discussed was to know whether Alsace and Lorraine should be united to one of the Confederated States in existence, either as a whole or in fractions, or whether they should remain at first an *immediate territory* of the Empire." And he added: "Seriously then the only question was this: Are Alsace and Lorraine to be joined to Prussia, or to form an immediate territory of the Empire? From the very beginning I have declared myself absolutely in favour of the latter of these two alternatives; first, in order not to bring dynastic questions unnecessarily into our political affairs; secondly, because I considered it more easy to reconcile the Alsatians to the name of *Germans* than *Prussians*.[1]

[1] In the discussions which took place in the Bundesrath on the constitution of Alsace-Lorraine, there was a question of dividing the two provinces between Bavaria and the Grand Duchy of Baden. In the course of the conversation which followed the signature of the preliminaries of peace by the Minister of Southern Germany Bismarck is said to have declared that "in order to efface any unpleasant recollections of the battles of 1866, he intended to leave Bavaria the town of Wissembourg after the annex-

Up to the end of 1871 Alsace-Lorraine was administered by the Imperial Chancellery represented at Strasburg by a Governor-General, and a Civil Commissary. At the beginning of 1872 Von Möller was appointed President-in-Chief. By virtue of clause 10 of the law of the 30th of December, 1871, the 6th of January, 1872, he exercised dictatorial powers. The same law divided the Reichsland into three districts and twenty-two circles.

The decisions of the German Government relative to the option of nationality occasioned a veritable exodus of the population of Alsace-Lorraine.

During the last days of September all the roads leading to France were invaded by a people in flight. All that could leave, left; and those who remained wept in anguish at being unable to abandon their homes.

It is estimated that during the last fortnight of September the emigration from Alsace-Lorraine into France amounted to nearly two hundred thousand persons.[1] At this period the population of Metz had fallen to twenty thousand inhabitants, out of whom only seventeen conscripts were to be found ready to serve in the ranks of the German army; out of two hundred French magistrates holding courts in Alsace-Lorraine only five remained to administer justice in the name of the Emperor William. Many factories were hastily sold; masters and men left the workshop, making the journey to the French frontiers in common.

ation of Alsace." "These tidings," remarks M. Jolly, a Baden Minister, in his *Mémoires*, "had been welcomed with lively emotion by Count von Bray, the Bavarian Minister." See Ottokar Lorenz, p. 525.

[1] A. Mézières, *Les Souffrances d'un Pays Conquis.* (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, du 1er décembre, 1872, p. 561.)

In eight days Nancy saw its population increased by ten thousand inhabitants. The prefecture registered twenty-five thousand options, and six thousand voluntary enlistments in the French army were received. In the Department of the Vosges an increase of forty-five thousand inhabitants was reckoned.

The Government had to find help for the first needs of these emigrants. It was aided in this painfully patriotic task by the assistance of the populations of the east. Then, too, was founded on the initiative of the Comte d'Haussonville the "Society for the Protection of the Men of Alsace-Lorraine," a work of lofty patriotic and humanitarian sentiment, whose services have strengthened for all eternity the sentiment which unites all Frenchmen of the east. By the efforts of the active and intelligent men, who guided the society, the past was united with the future. A great number of the unfortunate men torn from the mother country by the cruelties of the war found a new country in Algeria: under another sky, in quite another landscape, the Alsatian village rose on the slope of a hill, and sometimes the traveller is amazed at unexpectedly meeting "blue eyes" in this rough and distant land among savage countenances.

VI

The Permanent Committee

Meanwhile party agitation increased in the measure of the closeness of the approach of the period of the return to Parliament. On the 10th of October, the permanent Committee made an application to M. Thiers

in order to submit to him its observations on the subject of Gambetta's speech at Grenoble: it was considered as a threat of civil war. M. Thiers declared that he thought it "bad, very bad," and that if the tribune were open to him, he would fight it with all his energy. M. Thiers was more than ever nervous, anxious, he felt that something was at work in the dark around him. A mere nothing would irritate him. Sometimes he exhausted his ingenuity in finding formulas which would give assurance on the morrow and afford satisfaction to everybody, sometimes he allowed himself to sink into discouragement, ready to leave himself to the jolting of events.

Bonapartist Agitation

He was in any case able to expend his ill-humour upon the Bonapartist party. Napoleon III had given his cousin, Prince Jerome, a letter permitting him to come forward as a candidate at all elections. "I shall recommend all my friends," he said, "to support your election, not only in Corsica but in all the Departments where you shall have a chance of being elected." Prince Napoleon thus received a kind of investiture.

Named a General Councillor of Corsica at the end of the year 1871, he had, for the first time, in August, 1872, with the authorization of the Government, solicited by the agency of our Consul at Genoa, crossed France without being disturbed, to go to Ajaccio. In the month of October he accepted the invitation of M. Maurice Richard, a former minister of the Empire, to go, accompanied by his wife, the Princess Clotilde, to shoot on his estate at Millemont (Seine-et-Marne). This was to draw near openly to Paris and Versailles. The Prince was a man of high intellectual value,

ambitious, hasty, more embarrassing perhaps to his own friends than to his adversaries. He might become a nuisance without being really dangerous. The aim of the Prince's visit was, it was said, a reconciliation with M. Rouher, whom he had ceased to see for several years, and with whom he was henceforth about to share the management of the Bonapartist party. M. Thiers thought he must act in order not to create a precedent which might prove useful to Napoleon III. Appealing to the law of dethronement, he had the Prince sent back under escort to the frontier.

Meanwhile the apprehension of an approaching restoration of the Empire was increasing. It was confidently affirmed that the Powers were favourable to this plan. It was known that the Emperor kept his partisans in working order, that he worked much himself. It was said that he was wonderfully well and that he would soon appear in the midst of one of his army corps.

The Monarchists were still more disturbed than the Republicans. Only one further chance of salvation was apparent to them, some kind of a combination which should bring the Duc d'Aumale into power. In the month of October attention was attracted by a visit paid to Frohsdorff by the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia. The rumour was spread that the Comte de Chambord was authorizing the deputies of the Right to try the loyal experiment of the Republic, and the Duc d'Aumale to accept the Presidency of the Republic.

The Comte de Chambord and the Duc d'Aumale

In a letter addressed on the 15th of October to M. de La Rochette, deputy of the Loire-Inférieure, the Comte de Chambord protested against these allegations,

and declared that in proclaiming the Republic a sure descent was being made into the abyss, whether with the violent or the moderate party. As for his own opinion, "The Republic is a source of disturbance to interests as much as to consciences."

So far as the Duc d'Aumale was concerned the Comte de Chambord wrote that he "was not called upon to busy himself about the Duc d'Aumale. That gentleman could do or not do what he pleased, accept or refuse a position in the actual order of affairs." The schism was, in fact, complete between the head of the family and his cousin. The latter, who cherished no illusions on the subject of the tentatives at fusion, had torn down all the veils in a speech which he had delivered on the 28th of May, 1872, in the course of the debate upon the Army Bill.

Having had occasion, in the course of his explanation, to recall that old penalty formerly inscribed in the Code: "Deprived of the honour of serving in the French army," the Duc d'Aumale added, not without eloquence:

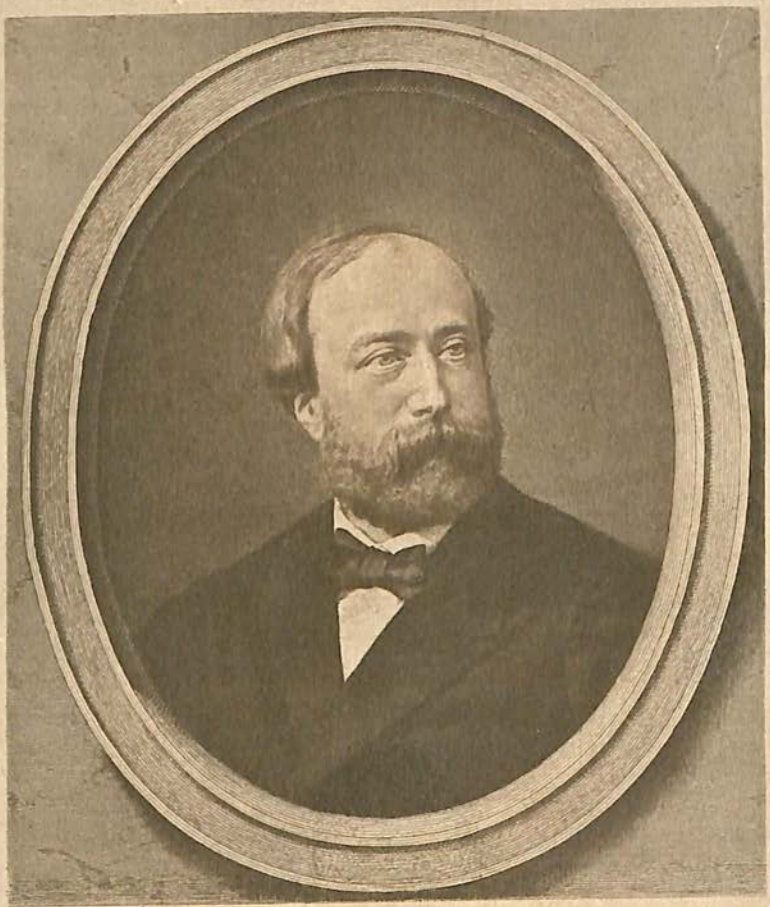
"I cannot admit the reversal of this sentence, and that the honour of remaining under the colours should be inflicted as a penalty. . . ." (*Loud applause from a great number of benches.*) under the flag of France. . . ."

A MEMBER.—"Which?"

THE DUC D'AUMALE.—"Under this beloved flag. . . ." (*Ah! ah! Hear! hear! from different benches of the Centre and the Right.*)

THE MARQUIS DE FRANCLIEU.—"What is that?" (*murmurs*).

THE DUC D'AUMALE.— . . . "Under this beloved flag to which all Frenchmen, of every opinion and every origin, rallied during the war, which all good citizens surrounded when a strip had been torn from it to form the sinister emblem of civil war. . . . (*Hear! Hear!*) This flag which has so long been the symbol of victory and which has continued to be in our mis-



Héliog. Dujardin

Le Comte de Chambord
from the engraving by Gaillard

fortunes the emblem of concord and union. (*Applause from several benches.—Murmurs from some others.—Prolonged interruption.*)

This manifestation on the part of the uncle of the Comte de Paris had displayed in full evidence the internal dissensions by which the royal family was torn. The situation was characterized by a witty sally in the lobbies of the Assembly. The Comte de Chambord, they said, has one subject less, and M. Thiers one nephew more. The Comte de Chambord had never forgotten his grudge and his mistrust in reference to the Princes of Orleans. This mental disposition explains all his conduct. A story related by the Marquis de Dampierre is full of light: he had gone to Antwerp and had been received by the Pretender. He had maintained respectfully but firmly ideas favourable to the fusion.

Conversation between the Comte de Chambord and Marquis de Dampierre.

"A very frank and very lively conversation took place," said he, "at the end of which his Grace, getting up, held out his two arms to me, and drawing me to him, embraced me, saying: 'I had been mistaken, I thought you had become Orleanist; you have always remained the same. Well! Defend, as you shall know how in the difficult position in which you are, the cause of royalty; I shall find nothing further to say on the subject. I only ask of you one promise: if the Duc d'Aumale is called to the Presidency of the Republic, give me your word that you will not vote for him.' 'Your Grace,' I replied to him, 'I have no inclination in favour of such a solution; but circumstances can become such that a promise of this kind would gall my conscience as a deputy; I will not make it to

your Grace.' That displeased him; he said: 'You do not promise me even that! . . .'"[1]

Religious Manifestations

The kind of disturbance and disorder in which all those found themselves, who, in France, were attached to monarchical ideas and the Catholic faith is to be observed in a recrudescence of religious manifestations imploring the intervention of heaven. A kind of mystical impulse carried pious souls to the places of pilgrimage: to Sainte Anne d'Auray, to Notre-Dame de la Salette, and above all to Lourdes. Some pilgrims went as far as Rome, and their two-fold faith was confirmed in their protestations against the Italian occupation. Everywhere in France petitions were circulated in favour of the re-establishment of the temporal power of the Pope. They were covered with signatures. The bishops were at the head of the movement. And this initiative was soon to have peculiarly grave consequences to internal and external policy alike.

Meanwhile the country affirmed its preferences plainly and dictated its will clearly. A fortnight before the re-opening of the Assembly, on the 26th of October, seven elections took place. In six Departments—Calvados, Gironde, Indre-et-Loire, Oise, Vosges, Algeria—Republicans were elected. The Right of the Assembly only counted one single election to its advantage, that of a Monarchist in the Morbihan.

[1] Marquis de Dampierre, *Cinq années de vie politique*, p. 74.

CHAPTER IX

THE LIBERATION OF THE TERRITORY

Germany after the Victory; Bismarck's Foreign Policy—Interview of the three Emperors—The Cultur-Kampf—The Winter Session—Message of M. Thiers, November 13th, 1872; he declares for the Republic; Protest of the Right; the Committee of Fifteen: it decides to claim Ministerial Responsibility—The Committee of Thirty—Ministerial Changes—Debate on the Dissolution—The Government breaks with the Left—Legislative Work; Passing of various Laws; the Property of the House of Orleans—Death of Napoleon III—Result of Efforts with a View to Fusion—Letter of the Comte de Chambord to Mgr. Dupanloup, February 8th, 1873—The Roman Question—Negotiations for the anticipated Evacuation of the Territory—Count von Arnim and Bismarck—The Work of the Committee of Thirty—Restitution of Belfort—M. Thiers yields to the Committee—The Bill of the Thirty—M. Thiers is excluded from the Tribune—Convention of Liberation signed March 15th, 1873—The Assembly declares that M. Thiers has deserved well of the Country.

I

Difficult Position of M. Thiers.

THE knot of the drama continued to draw more tightly round M. Thiers. The provisional arrangement had lasted too long. Everybody was weary: this changing country now thought to find stability in a new change. Some persuaded themselves that the Assembly, transforming itself and forgetting its

dissensions, was about to restore the Monarchy without delay; others demanded a new Assembly to found the Monarchy. Should they leave to the old man who had been salvation in the first instance, and was the obstacle now, only the time to fulfil the programme which he had drawn up at Bordeaux: to reconstitute the country or at least free the territory?

M. Thiers felt plainly that his days were numbered: he made haste. He asked himself, on the other hand, if the will of the conqueror would permit him to anticipate the dates of payment, and to hurry on the evacuation. Bismarck, on his side, was much concerned: he did not wish to abandon the territorial guarantee without having obtained the whole of the indemnity; and the indemnity even was not sufficient for him; he intended first of all, as far as it was humanly possible, to get his securities.

He was in fear of a fresh war; he feared that in France the policy of revenge would get the upper hand, whether a restored dynasty found a Europe on its guard and less indifferent than that of 1870, or a revolutionary Republic mistress of Paris and France, unchained the storms. In his musings at Varzin this double apprehension tortured him: the marvellous elasticity of France, her financial recovery, the reconstitution of her army, so many facts only too evident which would have become causes of remorse to him if war happened to break out between the two countries.

Bismarck's Sentiments

The dread of a fresh war imposes itself to the exclusion of everything else upon Bismarck's policy during the period which immediately followed the war. He had already given

utterance to it on the 13th of September, 1870, on the morrow of Sedan, in a famous circular dated from Rheims: "We must not deceive ourselves on this point: that as a sequel to this war we must soon expect a fresh aggression on the part of France, and not a durable peace, whatever may be, for the rest, the conditions of peace, which we impose upon her. France will regard any peace as a truce, and will attack us afresh to avenge her defeat as soon as she feels herself strong enough, whether by her own resources, or with the aid of foreign alliances." The instructions addressed two years later by the Chancellor to Count von Arnim are still inspired with the same thought: "All that it is important to know is the time which the French will need to reorganize their army and their alliances in such a manner as to be capable, in their own opinion of re-opening the struggle. As soon as that moment has come any French Government, whatever be its nature, will be forced to declare war upon us."[1] In the Prince's *Reminiscences* the same fear constantly recurs like a *leit motiv*, and if one did not run the risk of showing a want of respect for so strong an intelligence as that of Prince Bismarck, one would say that this singular and obstinate preoccupation during the last twenty years of his life took the character of a veritable mania of persecution.

He lived in solitude at Varzin. It must be repeated that he was a sick man, his body caught in the series of nervous maladies, shingles, phlebitis, facial neuralgia which tortured him up to the intervention of Professor Schwenninger. This athletic man who loved the fields and forests, and would

[1] *Procès d'Arnim*, lettre du 2 février, 1873, p. 94.

have spent his energy in furious gallops in pursuit of a stag or a wolf, was shut up within the four walls of a study, obliged to write, with his goose quill encased in an enormous reed, the despatches which directed the world. He was furious at this captivity, this slavery: "I who would love so much to live the life of my ancestors, and plant my cabbages. . . . I have always detested the office," he repeated continually. Solitude is not good for the superior man. It disaccustoms him too much to the atmosphere of foolishness.

This solitude, this furious work, the debates which he had to wage against his first friends, the Conservatives, the feeling that he was not appreciated in his own country as he claimed to be, or, to speak more correctly, the evidence, terrible to these strong wills, that human will has its boundaries, everything contributed to feed in him that exasperation which was to have such serious consequences upon the destinies of Europe.

The Chancellor's Diplomacy

On the morrow of the victory during his long sleepless nights he was lost in reflections as to the means of preventing the resurrection of France, with the consequence, which he considered inevitable, of an anti-German coalition in Europe. We have seen the pressure which he exercised up to the last hour upon the Government of M. Thiers at the time of the discussion of the Army Bill. At the same time his diplomacy was stirring the world to find points of support against France, or to shake those which might have been able to help her. Such is the dominant thought of the two great works upon which his solitary activity was employed during the summer of 1872: on the one side the quest for an alliance

between the principal sovereigns of Europe, on the other the struggle with Rome and the *Cultur-Kampf*.

Let us first look at the question of alliances: "Count Schouvaloff was perfectly right when he told me that the idea of conditions gave me bad dreams." This is the phrase with which Bismarck begins the honest and profound confidences which he makes as to the relations between Germany and Russia. We must borrow another phrase from him no less clear and no less convincing: "One can easily see that, for Russia, there is a limit beyond which it will not be permitted that the influence of France should be attenuated. This limit, in my belief, was reached by the Treaty of Frankfort, and perhaps in 1870 and 1871 account had not yet been fully taken of this fact. I have some difficulty in believing that during the continuance of our war the Russian Cabinet clearly foresaw that it would have a Germany so strong and so established for its neighbour."

Holding these sentiments, and having, as he has often said, and often repeated, the idea that Germany could not be assured of her future if Russia was adverse to her, he concerned himself much on the morrow of the French war with the relations between the two Empires. He felt clearly that he had reached and perhaps crossed the line.

But it would have been a fault in tactics on his part to let this sentiment betray itself. Already a cloud had passed over the serene sky of the understanding at the time when Prince Gortschakoff had denounced the clause in the Treaty of Paris with reference to the liberty of the Black Sea without notifying to Prussia. Prince Bismarck had said nothing. He was not unaware that Chancellor

Gortschakoff, after having for a long time advertised him as "his pupil," had taken a dislike to the pupil, since the latter had outstripped, and far outstripped, his master. Accordingly, he took very good care not to put himself at the mercy of Russia. Once, trusting to the personal friendship of the two sovereigns, he was able to risk this game. He was not to repeat it.

As we have seen, he had turned towards Austria. He himself says, and says with emphasis, that he took this line after ripe reflection and by choice: "If, having the choice between an alliance with Russia and an alliance with Austria, I chose the latter, I acted by no means like a blind man; I was a prey to all the doubts which rendered the choice difficult." One of the reasons which determined him is that in courting Austria he excited the jealousy of Russia; he thought that if he could make Vienna come to Berlin, Saint-Petersburg would run there of itself.

Meeting of the Three Emperors

That is what actually happened. The Emperor of Austria, Francis Joseph, after having replaced Count Beust by Count Andrassy, abandoned himself with less restraint to the movement which carried all the German peoples, and even the German Austrians, to the new capital of the German supremacy. He had then decided to return to the Emperor William the visit which the latter had paid him at Gastein. The interview between the two sovereigns was announced as arranged to take place in September, 1872. As soon as this news was known at St. Petersburg, the Czar signified that he, too, would come to Berlin accompanied by his Chancellor. Thus the three Emperors met.

This was a veritable triumph for Prince Bismarck. Europe was recognizing the new Empire, coming to salute the conqueror, to ratify the accomplished facts. The Cabinet of Berlin was in quest of securities; were there any comparable to this? The entire Press resounded with panegyrics upon the greatness of such an event: it is the realization of the profound conceptions of a powerful mind which guides the world at its pleasure; Napoleon in his might had never dreamed of anything more effective. On the morrow of a second defeat of France the Congress of Vienna is renewed, but at Berlin, and, this time again, by a meeting of the sovereigns themselves.

The New Holy Alliance

Prince Bismarck, with his prodigious fertility in argument, sets forth for the benefit of lovers of theories the reasons for this new Holy Alliance: "If the monarchical Governments do not come to an understanding with a view to defend the interests of social and political order; if on the contrary they let themselves be towed along in the train of the chauvinistic movements of their subjects, I fear that the struggles which it will be necessary to sustain against international and revolutionary Socialism will be yet more dangerous, and that the victory of Monarchical order will be the more doubtful. Since 1871 I sought for a guarantee against these struggles, and I took that which was the most within my reach, the alliance of the Three Emperors." And he immediately adds: "I made an effort at the same time to engage the Monarchical principle in Italy to take this alliance as a point of support."

What is to be thought of the Alliance?

We are then concerned with "an alliance of the three Emperors." Such is the name which is given to this ingenious

combination which will pass into polemics and thence into history as a verified fact! Monarchical rights are the reason of its being. In fact, is not this doctrine the one which is becoming to such great sovereigns? Bismarck further writes to define matters: "France is a salutary bugbear for us."[1] Let us observe, however, that this conception does not go so far as to bring the three Emperors to support a restoration in France as in 1815. . . . On looking at it closely, in fact, one observes in the whole of this machination one part of artificial manufacture. Prince Bismarck is not the dupe of the words which he uses. His intention was by no means to outwit the Metternichs. Doctrines were no longer in fashion, but realities. His foreign colleagues themselves only paid these belated formulas the deference demanded by the proprieties and politeness. In reality they had come to Berlin only to see, get intelligence, watch the game. In public they embrace one another; are they really in agreement?

In the Press an immense noise was made about the triumph of Germany. Men would be glad to have it believed that a kind of ratification of the Treaty of Frankfort had been signed, and that a written compact bound the three Emperors from henceforth. Prince Bismarck showed off the interview as one of his great diplomatic successes; and being in the habit of minting the formulas which the gossips afterwards circulated as current coin, he said: "I have built myself a bridge with Vienna without breaking that which I already had with St. Petersburg."

[1] *Procès d'Arnim*, p. 81.

Yes; but did Russia, this time again, cross the bridge? "The Emperor Alexander had hardly arrived at Berlin before he had our Ambassador summoned to declare to him that, if there had been any prospect of hatching up anything whatever against France at Berlin, he would not have come there." [1]

Bismarck's Words

He knew it so well that he could not refrain from displaying his ill-humour even in the presence of the foreign diplomatists. Had not the curious conversation which he had with one of them, and which we are now in a position to reproduce, all the flavour of a confession? . . . Bismarck is positively displeased, nervously upset, writes M. de Gontaut-Biron, and he is impatiently waiting for the departure of the Emperors, which will take place this evening or to-morrow morning, in order to return to Varzin. Yesterday evening at the court concert I asked Russell if he knew anything, and I related to him what had been told to me in the morning of the friendly invitation made to Germany by Russia and Austria to maintain henceforth easy and conciliatory relations with France; I added that I was not far from believing, on the whole, that Germany would suffer some mortification from the interview: "I am all the more willing to believe it, Russell replied to me, because yesterday in this very place after the Court dinner, Bismarck, his eyes gleaming a bit, came up to me and, almost without stopping, said to me: 'I wanted to bring the three Emperors together here, I wanted to pose them like marble statues, the three Graces, and show them off like that! Andrassy is charming and full of intelligence! As for Gortschakoff, he gets on my

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 333.

nerves with his white cravat, and his claims to cleverness! He brought here some very white paper and very black ink, had himself accompanied by clerks, and wanted to write, but on that side I was deaf.' Then he disappeared. His expressions are crude, you will admit, and his bad temper flagrant. . . . " "I much doubt," adds M. de Gontaut-Biron, "whether he is honest on the subject of the intention *to write* something, which he attributes to the Russian Chancellor; it is absolutely contrary to the assertions of Karolyi, and of Prince Gortschakoff himself." [1]

If these different statements are as honest as they are exact, what remains of that famous combination, of which such an ostentatious display was made? Unless the constituting instruments of the Alliance of the Three Emperors come to light, we shall be able to consider it from henceforth as struck out of the pages of history.[2]

In any case, Bismarck, better informed than anybody, was certainly not satisfied. One day he took aside M. de Gontaut-Biron, the French Ambassador, and said to him these very words: "Between ourselves, there may have been an exchange of views and ideas here, but *no formal protocol*; we separate *without the passing of any written document between us*. Do not fail to inform your Government of this.". . . He went yet further: "Be reassured, and reassure M. Thiers. If you fulfil your engage-

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. p. 28.

[2] The professional diplomatists did not allow themselves to be taken in by the sleight of hand of the Imperial Triple Alliance. Count von Arnim, who loved to press the point on the sensitive spot, and knew that his despatches would pass under the Emperor's eyes, had the boldness, in a letter addressed to Bismarck, October 1st, 1872, to make an allusion to "the momentary fiasco of the interview of the Emperors at Berlin." *Procès d'Arnim*, p. 59.

ments nothing further will be demanded of you. There is a talk of your army and its organization. . . On this point Germany has not the right to address any remark to you. You do what you think suitable, and you are right." He went yet further: "France must be strong and wise; *she must be strong so that she may be able to play the part in the world which is assigned to her.*" These words certainly do not point to the idea of a destruction or irretrievable enfeeblement of France. Quite the contrary. They permit us to divine the evolutions, still uncertain, resting at the back of men's minds. Prince Bismarck is not to be deceived in the matter. While furnishing the theme "of the alliance of the three Emperors" to the enthusiasm of the censer-bearers, he knows well that the crack has already crept into the magnificent façade which he has been able to erect.

From this time he seeks for a buttress in Europe or at least a scaffolding for fortune. He has recourse from this time to Italy, so that she too, at need, may take up the defence of order and Monarchical principles.

This campaign was combined, for the rest, with another in which this powerful and restless mind was thenceforth engaged: the campaign against the Church of Rome.

It was inevitable that he should come to this. Being the blood, the nerves, and the force of the new Europe; it was inevitable that he should rise against the old Europe; being the successor of Luther he was bound to take up the work of that monk; being the man of the north, the destroyer and profaner of the Holy Roman Empire, he was bound to pursue the fight against Romanism.

The Letter against Romanism

Far away on the shores of the blue-waved sea, an ancient system of order exists. Asia, Egypt, Greece, Rome have bequeathed to it their traditions. The ancient shepherds of the people, the kings "with the bloody hands" have handed on their crown, the triple crown, to peaceful successors: now it is the reign of the old men "with the white hands."

These old men ravel up and unravel the affairs of the world by gentle gestures, words whispered in the ear, rules of conduct and counsels dictated to children and women which bend or transform the resolutions of men. Speech is their weapon. Their reign is the reign of the "word." This domination insinuates itself between all others; it shakes them without ceasing; it is like an incomprehensible wave which advances and retreats, but never gives way.

Luther had already denounced the Latin enchantments. Bismarck felt them around him. He could not endure this independent force encircling him, that impalpable resistance limiting him. He was the man of decisive battles, the man of "blood and iron." He was the victorious German of the legions. He thought this new duel up to his measure. He rushed into it brandishing his battle-axe over the head of his pale and delicate adversary: an old man, Pius IX.

Germanism and the Papacy

Protestantism is the Monarchical state; Catholicism is the Church. Rome is the Mediterranean tradition; Berlin is the continental tradition. The untamed glance of the green eyes has always dreaded the subtle glance of the black eyes. The antagonism is eternal. This time, however, the chances seemed favourable.

Romanism is not only beaten: it is divided; such evidently was the thought which animated Prince Bismarck. Rome was no longer in Rome.

It was the time to be done with an eternal and irreducible enemy once for all: "A fixed limit cannot be drawn to the pretensions of the Court of Rome," said Prince Bismarck. "The ancient conflict between priests and kings will not reach its end so very soon; it will not reach it especially in Germany. There will always remain in the Church of Rome an aggressive need of proselytism and domineering passion against Protestantism incapable of being bridled by any concordat; she does not tolerate other gods by her side. . . . . The Roman Curia is an independent political power among whose unchangeable qualities there figures the same need of expansion as in our French neighbours."

We observe the two great adversaries united in a single phrase.

The Cultur-Kampf.

One can judge of the sentiments of the hermit of Varzin at the moment when he opened hostilities, when he was piling up all the grievances against Rome of which his violent soul was full, at the time when along with the professors he proclaimed "the superiority of German culture," when he was reproaching so strongly the irreconcilable character of Poland and Alsace-Lorraine, when he was blaming the Ledochowskis and the Bonnechoses with not having helped him in his negotiations with France, at the moment when with a blindness really unworthy of an intelligence so keen and so well-informed, he said to Schultz: "I consider the Old Catholics the only Catholics," at the moment when at last, on the 14th of May,

1872, he declared war in open Reichstag, supported by the wild applause of the majority: "Do not be afraid, gentlemen; neither in deed nor in thought will we go to Canossa."

But one day they were to go to Canossa, and the author of the duel has himself explained the impossibility of the victory in an observation which has the intensity of one of Hogarth's caricatures: "The mistake was clearly revealed to me," he said, "when I saw Prussian policemen, good but clumsy fellows, rattling their spurs and trailing their sabres, as they ran behind supple and active priests, escaping through sham doors and recesses."[1]

But at the time when he engaged in the conflict with Rome and the reconstituted Catholic Centre, which was to give him so much trouble for so slight a reward, Bismarck was thinking of Germany, certainly, but he was also thinking of France. He always had the "nightmare of a coalition present in his mind. He saw the Pope serving as an intermediary between a French Monarchy restored by the bishops and Catholic Austria. He knew that a thousand natural reasons were preparing this connexion which would restore to Austria a predominant position in Germany.

To destroy this nightmare he cultivated the Italian alliance, and the effort to obtain this alliance was at the back of his conflict with the Papacy. The coincidence struck all minds at the time.[2] At the very date when the Cultur-Kampf was proclaimed at Berlin, the German-Italian alliance

[1] *Souvenirs*, t. ii. p. 154.

[2] See the interesting pamphlet published in 1872 by M. Déchamps, Belgian Minister: *Le Prince de Bismarck et l'entrevue des trois empereurs.* It sets forth the Catholic point of view.

was inaugurated at Rome. So then, at the bottom of these conflicts of principles realities were always to be found. The battle with Romanism had connexions with the campaign against France.

But here again, as in the case of the alliance of the Three Emperors, the phrase went beyond the thought, passion prevailed over the idea, the exact measure was not kept. Thus in the one case as in the other the final conclusion was to be a check: the pretended alliance of the Three Emperors contained the Franco-Russian alliance, the conflict with Rome contained the victory of the Papacy, the campaign of isolation against France was to turn upon the man who had not been able to foresee her resurrection, or had been unwilling to bring about the hour of wrath appeased, and of the return to equitable transactions.

Anxiety in Paris

However this may be, in October, 1872, at the time when the interview of the Three Emperors had just taken place at Berlin, at the time when the whole Press of Europe re-echoed with the praises of Prince Bismarck, and flung itself headlong into the campaign of the Cultur-Kampf, there was serious apprehension at Paris. The German army was still in occupation of France. It was not known whether it would consent to a complete evacuation. Thus the fixed idea of milliards to pay, territory to be liberated, never left the pillow of M. Thiers. He knew where he was, he believed himself to be at the mercy of a caprice. The loan of the three milliards had succeeded; the first payments had begun. But would Germany, would France, would the Assembly, the parties, the passions, all the complexity of an uncertain and confused convalescence, leave the old patrician

the truce necessary to roll off the burden of the past. Was it not better to make arrangements from this moment onwards to consolidate the present and insure the future?

II

The return of the National Assembly was awaited with impatience, and with no less impatience the Message of the President of the Republic.

The President's Message

On the 13th of November, M. Thiers himself read this document to the Assembly: First the loan; the President stated that within two months half of it had been subscribed. The Message then unfolded in detail the economical and financial situation of the country; it recalled the marvellous progress of external commerce which seemed to be about to rise to seven milliards fourteen millions in 1872, against six milliards two hundred and seventy-seven millions in 1869, the most fruitful year of the Empire; it explained the clauses of the new commercial treaty with England; it epitomized in the following terms the reasons which France might have for being satisfied.

The Recovery of France

After the most unhappy war, after the most terrible civil war, after the collapse of a throne which had been believed to be firm, France has seen all nations eager to offer her their capital, her credit better established than ever, eight milliards paid off in two years, the greatest part of these sums transported abroad without disturbance in the circulation, the bank note accepted as coin, the taxes, although increased by one third, paid without ruin to the tax-payers, the financial balance re-established or on the point of being so, two hundred millions devoted to liquidation, and industry, commerce, increasing by more than 709 millions in a single year!

In the midst of an indescribable silence he attacked the political question:

Gentlemen, events have founded the Republic, and to go back to its causes in order to discuss them and judge them would be to-day an enterprise as dangerous as it is useless. The Republic is in existence. . . .

Interruptions burst out: "No! no!" is the cry on the Right.

BARON CHAURAND.—"We said the opposite at Bordeaux!"

THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY.—"Be so good, gentlemen, as not to interrupt! You have no individual reply to make to a message addressed to the National Assembly." (*True! Hear! hear!*)

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC.—"I beg all opinions to wait and not to hasten to blame or approve. I resume.

"The Republic exists, it is the legal Government of the country: to aim at anything else would be a new revolution, and the most formidable of all. Do not let us waste our time in proclaiming it; but let us employ it in imprinting upon the Republic its desirable and necessary characters. A committee nominated by you some months ago gave it the title of the Conservative Republic. Let us take possession of this title, and let us endeavour above all that it may be deserved. (*Hear! hear!*)

"Every Government ought to be Conservative, and no society could live under a Government which was not so. (*General assent.*)

"The Republic will be Conservative or it will cease to be." (*Sensation.*)

A VOICE ON THE LEFT CENTRE.—"Hear! hear! We accept!"

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC.—"France cannot live among continual alarms: she wishes to be able to live in repose in order to work to support herself, to face her immense burdens; and if that calm, which is her indispensable need, is not left to her, whatever may be the Government that refuses her that calm, it will not long be tolerated by her. Let no illusions be formed. It may be believed that, thanks to universal suffrage, and resting thus on the power of numbers, a Republic might be

established which would be that of one party! Such a Republic would be the work of a day.

"The numbers themselves need repose, security, work. They may live on agitations for a few days, they do not live on them long. After having frightened others, they frighten themselves; they fling themselves into the arms of a master of adventures, and pay for some days of disastrous licence by twenty years of slavery. (*Prolonged applause from a great number of benches.*)

"This is what they have done often, you know it, and do not think that they are not capable of doing it again. They will recommence a hundred times over that sad and humiliating journey from anarchy to despotism, from despotism to anarchy, sown with shame and calamity, in which France has found the loss of two provinces, a trebled debt, the conflagration of her capital, the ruin of her public edifices, and that massacre of hostages, which, it was thought, would never be seen again. (*Profound emotion.*)

"I adjure you, gentlemen, do not forget these terms between which there is so terrible a bond: first, an agitated Republic, then a return to a power which is called strong because it is without control, and, in the absence of control, certain irremediable ruin.

"Yes, let us break the chain which binds these fatal terms together, and let us calm instead of agitating; let us make the necessary sacrifices to the common security, let us even make those which might seem excessive, and above all do not let us allow the reign of one party to peep out . . . for the Republic is only a contradictory term if, instead of being the Government of all, it is the Government of any one party whatever. If, for example, we wish to represent it as the triumph of one class over another, instantly we withdraw one part of the country from it, one part first, and the whole afterwards.

"For my own part, I do not understand, I do not admit the Republic except in taking it, as it ought to be, as the Government of the nation, which having, for a long time and in good faith, been willing to leave to an hereditary power a share in the direction of its destinies, but not having succeeded in this, owing to faults which it is impossible to judge of to-day, at last takes the line of governing itself, if alone, by its representatives, freely, wisely appointed, without recognition of party, class, birth, seeking them neither above nor below, neither to the

right nor to the left, but in that light of public esteem in which characters, qualities, defects, are outlined in forms impossible to mistake, and choosing them with that liberty which is only enjoyed in the bosom of order, calm, and security!

"Two years which have flowed on under your eyes, under your influence, under your control, in an almost complete calm, may give us the hope of founding the Conservative Republic, but only the hope; and, let it not be forgotten, the smallest mistake would be sufficient to make this hope vanish away in a distressing reality.

"We are touching, gentlemen, upon a decisive moment. The form of this Republic has only been a temporary form imposed by events resting on your wisdom, and on your harmony with the power which you had temporarily chosen; but all minds await you, all ask what date, . . . (*murmurs on the Right*) what form you will choose to give to the Republic, that Conservative force which it cannot dispense with. . . ."

THE DUC DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD DE BISACCIA.—"But we don't want it!"

THE VICOMTE DE LORGERIL.—"And the Bordeaux compact?"

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC.—"It is for you to choose the one and the other. The country, in giving you its powers, gave you the evident mission to save it, by procuring for it, first peace, after peace order, with order the re-establishment of its power, and lastly a regular Government. You have proclaimed this, and henceforth it is for you to settle the succession, the hour of those different parts of the work of salvation which is entrusted to you. May God preserve us from substituting ourselves for you! But on the date which you shall have fixed, when you shall have chosen some of your number to meditate upon this crowning work, if you desire our advice, we will give it to you loyally and resolutely. Up to that time count upon our profound attachment to the country, to you, to this thing so beautiful, so dear to our hearts, which was before us, and which will be after us, to France, which alone deserves all our efforts and all our sacrifices.

"Here is a great, a decisive session opening before you; on our side neither deference, nor help, nor devotion, nor resolution will be wanting to the success of your work, which may God be pleased to bless, to render complete and, above all, lasting; a thing which has not yet been granted to us since the

beginning of the century!" (*Long acclamations and repeated applause on the Left Centre, and the Left.*)

Thus spoke before the Assembly, surprised, disturbed, and yet attentive, the experienced old man to whom the growing Republic entrusted the task of tracing the main lines of the edifice. He set forth all the problems with an incontestable competence and weight, with a remarkable tact and pliancy. He indicated the solutions which he thought the best. Was not this debate, in which the interests of the country and the future of the country were studied in face of the country itself, comparable to the finest pages in ancient history?

The Message read, emotion with difficulty restrained spread over the whole Assembly. The parties measured one another with their eyes. The Right was stormy; some of its members rushed to the tribune shouting that they protested. The Right Centre preserved a cold reserve; the Left applauded with enthusiasm. "The emotion produced by the deliverance of the President of the Republic," states the official account, "occasioned great and general agitation in the Assembly. Most of the Representatives got up, and without leaving their benches, delivered themselves to animated colloquies in groups." President Grévy understood that he would not be able to control the excitement. He suspended the sitting for twenty minutes.

Intervention of the Right

On the resumption of the sitting, M. Audren de Kerdrel took upon himself to interpret the wrath of the Right. He brought forward a proposal worded as follows: "I have the honour to demand that a Committee be appointed to review the Message of the President

of the Republic." He demanded of the Assembly a free and dispassionate judgment.

Characterizing the declarations of M. Thiers, he expressed himself thus: "There are in the Message some expressions which might, perhaps, be of a nature to establish an equivocation, a misunderstanding. We would seem to be, according to the President, further advanced upon the domain of constitution than I imagined; and even though there should only be this doubt to enlighten, I think that my proposal should have its opportunity, and I hope that you will consent to declare its urgency."

M. Thiers rose. He declared that "he had believed himself to be speaking in the sense of the veritable majority, and that he held it to be an honour to be judged by the country and the Assembly."

M. Grévy then drew attention to the fact that it is contrary to parliamentary usage to review a Message, but that the Assembly can reply. M. de Kerdrel modified his proposal to this effect, and it was adopted.

The impression produced by the Message was no less in the country; it was believed that at last we were going to get out of the constitutional uncertainty. By the wish of M. Thiers, the ways were opened. Since he pronounced plainly in favour of the Republic the lists seemed to be cleared. But the majority was determined not to give a definitive sanction to this form of Government.

M. Thiers has been much reproached for the initiative taken by him. He explains himself with much lucidity according to his habitual fashion:

"The system of government under which we were living," he says, "created by the Bordeaux Compact, consisted of a single and sovereign Assembly in presence of an Executive Power sprung from it and responsible to it. Such a system could only be provisional; its continuance was desired only by the extreme parties: the extreme Left because a single and sovereign Assembly was in conformity with its revolutionary principles; the extreme Right because in the weakness of a provisional system it hoped to find facilities to restore the Monarchy. . .

"On the other hand the Left Centre and the Left wished to organize a Conservative Republic definitively by charging me with the Presidency for a term of greater or less duration. The Right Centre itself, hoping that I should give myself to it, agreed to this organization and wished to give me the Presidency for life.

"Whatever were the intentions of the parties, my duty was to point out to the Assembly the danger to which it would expose the country by leaving insufficiently organized powers to come after it, and to propose to the Assembly the means to conjure away that danger.

"Personally I did not wish for a too prolonged Presidency, still less for a life Presidency. It did not suit me to enfeoff myself indefinitely to politics, desiring to pass my last years in a repose which only the interest of public affairs had been able to make me leave, and it suited me still less to play the part of a little middle-class usurper taking advantage of the misfortunes of the times to impose myself upon France. I was at the head of the Government from patriotic devotion with an interest in glory, which I admitted, but I was not a functionary fastened to his

place, and I did not intend to sell myself to anybody for a few years of power.

"The thought by which I was held was the most conservative in the world. I did not fear the future elections; but as the unexpected always finds a place in matters political, I desired that the Assembly during this session, *which would probably be the last*, should vote the Conservative measures, which we should not perhaps obtain from another Assembly."[1]

Committee on the Message

On the 18th of November the National Assembly, sitting in Committee, elected the Committee of fifteen members charged with the examination of the proposition of M. de Kerdrel, that is to say to discuss whether there was or was not a means of replying to the Message of the President of the Republic. This Committee was composed of nine members of the Right and the Right Centre: MM. Batbie, Raoul Duval, de Labassetière Henri Fournier, the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, Lucien Brun, de Lacombe, Grivart and Ernoul; of three members of the Left Centre: MM. Lasteyrie, Ricard, and Gaulthier de Rumilly; of two members of the Republican Left: MM. Albert Grévy and Emmanuel Arago; lastly of M. Martel, whose wavering opinions inclined to those of the majority.

It was immediately understood that this Committee was an engine of war against the Republic and its President.

M. Thiers knew that he was beaten in advance in the Assembly; his tactics consisted in seeking for victory in the country. The first thrust was delivered by General Changarnier. On the 18th of November he interpellated the Government upon

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 348.

"the travels of M. Gambetta in Savoy and Dauphiny." General Changarnier, a peerless soldier, whom a too rapid career had turned grey, and a too long idleness had broken, claimed, in spite of his eighty years, to be still an indispensable man. He could not comfort himself for not being a Marshal of France, and not having given up, thought of becoming President of the Republic. He spoke in short sallies, sometimes happy. In listening to him his audience always respected him, but smiled at times. The skirmish between General Changarnier and M. Gambetta was sharp. It caused irritation of mind. But the real interest of the battle was not there.

The chief of the Right, the tactician who was going henceforth to take the direction of the campaign, the Duc de Broglie, was at the tribune; he was not satisfied with the reading of the minutes of the permanent Committee; he begged the President "with anguish" to come and repeat his explanations in the presence of the Assembly. It was now the turn of M. Thiers. He showed himself painfully affected by a procedure which he might have considered offensive. He loftily declared that they had no right to drag him to the tribune to affirm his life-long opinions there; he refused to be put on the stool of penitence, to be treated like a suspect and a culprit, to be constrained to make a profession of faith. His whole life and the two years which he had just spent at the head of affairs were a sufficient answer to the questions which it was proposed to put to him, but in appearing to doubt him they gave him the right to demand an evidence of confidence. This evidence he asked for and concluded with these words: "When you want a decided

Government, you must yourself be decided. Well! be decided with reference to us! Pray be so. . . . You complain of a provisional Government, make a definitive Government!"

The Duc de Broglie thought he had reached the result that he sought in separating M. Thiers at once from the Left and the Right. He proposed to the Assembly, without discussing the question of confidence or no confidence, an Order of the day loftily reproving the doctrines professed at the Grenoble banquet.

M. Thiers demanded an Order of the day expressing confidence; he accepted that proposed by M. Mettetal, which was as follows:

> The National Assembly, confident in the energy of the Government, and reproving the doctrines professed at the banquet of Grenoble, passes to the Order of the day.

After a painful contest M. Mettetal's Order of the day was adopted by 263 to 116.

This was a half check to M. Thiers. The extreme Left had voted against the Order of the day, while part of the Left and certain members of the Right abstained from voting. The Government was henceforth at the mercy of a caprice of the majority. Already the approaching disappearance of M. Thiers was spoken of, and the constitution of a provisional Government composed of Marshal MacMahon and Generals Changarnier and Ladmirault. This last and Marshal MacMahon thought themselves obliged to protest to their devotion to the President of the Republic by a visit paid at his official residence.

M. Thiers and the Committee

The Kerdrel Committee was formed. It appointed the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier its president, M. Raoul Duval its secre-

tary, and M. Batbie its reporter. It immediately decided to preserve strict secrecy as to its deliberations; what was in progress?

On the 22nd of December, 1872, M. Thiers was heard by the Committee, which put three questions to him:

1. As to the sense in which the Grenoble banquet had been qualified as a "regrettable incident" in the Message.

2. The Committee, surprised that a demand for modifications in the existing institutions should have been introduced into the Message, wished to know how such modifications could be reconciled with the Bordeaux Compact?

3. In what manner did the Government propose to depart from the actual institutions, and apply new ones?

M. Thiers replied with irony that these were mere questions of words, and he made no concealment of the fact that the real debate was elsewhere.

"Why not admit straight off that the general spirit of the Message had displeased a part of the Assembly, that it was reproached with being too Republican?

"I found the Republic ready made," added M. Thiers. "Nobody proposed to me at Bordeaux to create the Monarchy, and I could not betray the power placed in my hands. My conviction is that the Monarchy is impossible, because there are three dynasties for one single throne. I am accused of having torn up the Bordeaux Compact, but all the parties have violated it. In my Message I have only done one thing: firmly accentuated Conservative sentiments. For two months everybody has been talking of departing from the provisional arrangement; these demand dissolution, those a constitution. For my own part I have done nothing of the kind. I limited myself to saying to the Assembly: 'If you believe the moment has come to make constitutional reforms, act in a conservative and

liberal spirit.' Even those," he added, "who go to Antwerp or Chislehurst, to offer the crown to the Princes of their choice, also demand to leave the provisional arrangement, and if we accepted the solutions which they pursue, would not accuse us of breaking our word."

The opinion expressed by M. Thiers did not modify the sentiments of the Committee. It affected to wish to re-establish the intimate agreement between the Assembly and the Executive Power, and with this thought it declared for a prompt reorganization of ministerial responsibility.

The report was a blow delivered directly at M. Thiers. He did not think it his duty to attack the work of the Committee in the face; but he proposed to amend it by adding to the organization of ministerial responsibility the creation of a second Chamber. This time it was the Committee that jibbed. To accept this amendment was to found the Republic, to pronounce the dissolution of the Assembly, to make an appeal to the country. At no price was the Right disposed to hasten the hour of its own disappearance.

Thus the Committee, maintaining at once the provisional arrangement and the misunderstanding, proposed to the Assembly to vote the following resolution, which was to be substituted for the proposal of M. de Kerdrel:

SINGLE CLAUSE.—A Committee of fifteen members will be appointed in Committee with the object of presenting to the National Assembly with the shortest delay a Bill upon ministerial responsibility.

Parliamentary Tactics

In defect of the Power the majority wished to annex the Ministry. It was open war. The Government could not decline the challenge. On the 28th of November it ap-

peared in the Chamber with the firm resolve to resist. M. Dufaure, Vice-President of the Council,[1] who represented the Government, was a skilled Parliamentary free-lance. He took the word at the opening of the sitting. In a calm and closely argued speech he unmasked the tactics of the Right. "Its avowed object," he said, "is to organize ministerial responsibility. But what it seeks before everything else is to forbid the tribune to M. Thiers."

"The Government," declared M. Dufaure, "is the enemy of equivocations. It is disposed to accede to the wishes of the Committee, but it demands a complete organization of the public powers. One cannot," he said, "at one and the same time demand absence of power and impose responsibility," and he brought forward a motion drawn up in the following terms:

A Committee of thirty members shall be appointed in Committee with the object of presenting to the National Assembly a Bill to determine the attributes of the public powers, and the conditions of ministerial responsibility.

M. Batbie demanded a suspension of the sitting in order that the Committee might be able to deliberate upon the proposal of the Government. During the suspension M. Thiers summoned the Council of Ministers twice; he was heard by the Committee. It persevered in its conclusions. M. Dufaure declared, amid the applause of the whole Left, that the Government adhered to the form of motion which it had presented to the

[1] As a consequence of the Rivet Law a decree of the 12th of September, 1871, had instituted a vice-presidency of the Council. M. Dufaure, keeper of the seals, had been called to these functions.

Assembly. That alone could bring the debate to an end. The decisive engagement took place the next day, on the 29th of November. In spite of a heavy fall of rain a considerable crowd took up a position at the approaches to the Assembly.

Fresh Intervention of M. Thiers

M. Thiers spoke first in the midst of a deep silence. In the words of an usher of the Chamber, "the flies did not venture to move."

He brought his attack to bear upon the question so cleverly dissembled in the report: Republic or Monarchy. He tore up the Bordeaux Compact with decision. He recalled the situation in which he found himself during the Commune, the promises which he had been obliged to make, and intended to keep.

"You must put yourselves in my place. Picture to yourselves the situation in which I was! I was interpellated with considerable sharpness. I came to tell you so. Was I interrupted? Was I told that I had been wrong to pledge my word? But I hasten to make my avowal: I am the only person here who is pledged by it; the whole truth must be spoken, it pledges me alone! But it does pledge me. You are not pledged, I am!"

That was not enough. M. Thiers thought, after having reflected long upon the subject, that the promises made in 1871 ought to be kept; the Republic was now a necessity.

"I do not hesitate to speak the word; if I saw in front of me the possibility of creating the Monarchy, if one could. . . . If one can, you must tell me so! If I believed that to create it at this moment was a duty, that it was a way of ending our anxieties; if I were sure that a Monarchy had a future, that it could last, that men were agreed, that one of the three possible Monarchies would meet with the submission of the two others, and the submission of that considerable portion of the country which has given itself to the Republic, do you know what I

would do ? I should say ; I have taken a pledge : that concerns only myself, it does not concern you ! I would find a way of retiring, and I would leave those to act who would be able to restore the Monarchy.

" Interrupt me now at once if you believe that the interest of the country lies in creating the Monarchy to-day ; call me down from the tribune, take the power, it is not I who will dispute it against you.

" Gentlemen, this is what I am. I am an old disciple of the Monarchy, I am what is called a Monarchist practising the Republic for two reasons : because he has pledged himself, and because, practically, to-day, he cannot do anything else. That is the kind of Republican that I am ; I give myself out for what I am, I deceive nobody.

" Well ! the equivocation will cease this very moment. You ask me why I am applauded ; here is the reason !

" It is not because I have played false to the teachings of my life ; it is not because I share the opinions of the honourable deputies who sit upon those benches (*the orator points to the Left*) ; it is because I share the opinions, not of the most advanced, but of the most moderate. No ! they know that on most questions, social, political, and economical, I do not share their opinions ; they know it ; I have always told them so.

" No, neither on taxation, nor on the army, nor on social organization, nor on political organization, nor on the organization of the Republic do I think as they do.

" But I am applauded because I am very determined on this point : that for France to-day there is no other possible Government except the Conservative Republic. This is what wins me a favour which I have not courted by any disavowal of my life-long opinions."

M. Ernoul, of the Right, replied to the President of the Republic. He adjured him " with clasped hands " to place himself at the centre of the Conservative party and not to cut the cable, which united M. Thiers to the Assembly. " Do not cut it," he cried tragically, " it is fastened to the sheet anchor."

Patriotic anguish rose to its heights ; the emotion of the Right was visible. M. Thiers had formed a

fixed opinion; he did not allow himself to be shaken. He ascended the tribune afresh. He insisted on the adoption of the motion drawn up by the Government. By clinging to the proposal of the Committee an impossible position was created for the Executive Power. The crisis was offered to it without the means of preventing it, that is to say discussion. Without the right of *veto*, without the power of demanding a second deliberation, without the institution of a second and moderating Chamber, the Assembly would be able, by voting a law which the Government did not accept, to compel it to retire without explanations, without discussion, without its having been able to point out the danger. Lastly, the question had been so put that the vote on the measure introduced by M. Dufaure carried with it the confidence, or no confidence of the Assembly.

The division took place. By 372 to 335, that is to say with a majority of thirty-seven, M. Dufaure's measure was adopted.

At the Saint-Lazare station a compact crowd awaited the issue of the debate with anxiety. It welcomed the deputies with cries of "Vive la République!"

III

Uncertain Victory.

The results of this day cannot be exaggerated. The decisive battle, the "battle of the Message" had been fought. M. Thiers had flung himself headlong into the midst of the Assembly to snatch a resolution from it which should confirm the system of Government of which he was the Head, and which was the Republic in embryo. He proposed to profit by the

division and embarrassment of the Rights; he relied on the wish clearly expressed by the country; he counted on his personal influence, and upon the prestige attached to his position as Head of the State. Perhaps he hoped to carry a vote more easily at the time when, the territory not being yet freed, he thought himself still indispensable. He leaned with his whole weight. The message of the 13th of November, long meditated, into which he had put all his shrewdness, all his strength, was a masterpiece. The victory, at first sight, appeared to be uncertain.

Shaken by the vote of the Order of the day closuring the Changarnier interpellation, in a minority on the Kerdrel Committee, M. Thiers had been obliged to attenuate the declarations of the Message, to resume the Bordeaux Compact; in one word, to beat a retreat in order to keep the power. However his bold offensive strategy had none the less obtained a first result.

The Committee of Thirty and the Constitution

It forced the Right into the negative position in which it confined itself. It forced it back upon the duty of making a constitution. This Committee of Thirty which, by a counter attack on the part of M. Dufaure, M. Thiers snatched from the ill will of the majority, was in the end the one which, after many alternatives, was one day to found the Republic.[1]

[1] This Committee, famous in the Parliamentary annals, included nineteen members of the Right and Right Centre: MM. Batbie, Théry, Delacour, d'Haussonville, Sacaze, Labassetière, Fournier, de Larcy, d'Audiffret-Pasquier, de Cumont, Decazes, Lucien Brun, E'L'braly, de Lacombe, Amédée Lefèvre-Pontalis, Desseilligny, Grivart, Ernoul, Baze; and of eleven members of the Left and Left Centre: MM. Delacour, Duchâtel, Marcel

M. Thiers was soon to pay by his fall for the bold and fertile action which he had just accomplished. The Right felt the range of the blow and did not forgive him. The actual rupture dates from that time.

After the sitting of the 29th of November, 1872, the last ties were cut. M. Thiers was to be turned out. But if it was still too soon, it was already too late.

The Bonapartist Party

From the moment when there was a question of attacking M. Thiers thoroughly there was a hostility close at hand, an assured account, it was the Bonapartist party. Some indications had revealed in the course of the great battle which had just been fought a first inclination on the part of the Monarchist Right to draw near to this group which it had hitherto held at a distance. But a common dread was stronger than ancient hatred.

In his speech, M. Ernoul, speaking of the *Coup d'État* of December, 1851, had styled Prince Louis Napoleon "a chance Caesar." The words did not appear next day in the *Journal Officiel*. M. Mestreau drew attention to this, and M. Haentjens, a Bonapartist, shouted to him: "You will not prevent the union of the Conservatives from taking place." M. Challemel-Lacour was able to say that the suppression of M. Ernoul's expression was the price of a bargain.

M. Prax-Paris, Bonapartist deputy of the Tarn-

Barthe, Duclerc, Ricard, Martel, Arago, Bertault, Albert Grévy, Max Richard.

M. de Larcy, a Legitimist, a former minister of M. Thiers, was named president; the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, vice-president; M. Amédée Lefèvre-Pontalis and the Comte Othonin d'Haussonville, secretaries.

et-Garonne, interpellated the Minister of Home Affairs on the 30th of November with reference to the addresses and political aspirations formulated by the Municipal Councils in favour of M. Thiers. All of a sudden the debate took the guise of a revenge upon the sitting of the previous day. M. Prax-Paris demanded the immediate application of ministerial responsibility, and affirmed that M. Victor Lefranc, the Minister of Home Affairs, had violated the law in not taking measures against the municipalities guilty of approving of the policy of M. Thiers, and of saying so. According to him it was by manifestations of this kind that the moral order was disturbed.

Resignation of M. Victor Lefranc

After a violent speech from M. Raoul Duval, the Assembly voted by 305 to 298 an Order of the day blaming the Minister of Home Affairs. M. Victor Lefranc immediately resigned. After the sitting M. Rouher, who felt the ground growing firmer, was able to turn to his own account the formula emitted by the Duc de Broglie: "At last we have pulled the first leaf off the artichoke."

Evolution of M. Thiers

M. Thiers understood the reach of the warning. Above all, it was necessary to live, to gain time. Perspectives were opening in the direction of Germany in view of fresh negotiations. A presidential crisis might deal a blow to the interests of the country. Accordingly, taking a marked step towards the Right, he replaced M. Victor Lefranc, who belonged to the Republican Union, at the Home Office, by M. de Goulard, a member of the Right Centre, who had rallied since Bordeaux to the policy of M. Thiers. M. de Goulard left the Ministry of Finance to M. Léon Say, prefect

of the Seine, and a member of the Left Centre of the National Assembly. M. de Fourtou, of the Right Centre, was called to the Ministry of Public Works (Dec. 7, 1872).

The appointment of M. de Goulard to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the specially political portfolio in the Cabinet, was an important concession to the Right. Since the 19th of February, 1871, this post had been occupied by proved Republicans.[1] M. Thiers explained himself in these terms upon the change in the apparent direction of his policy: "As for me, I have made a concession which has cost me nothing because I have made selections which had been for a long time in my mind; but I have yielded in a certain measure, in order that the grave consequences of a rupture may not be charged to my account. . . . To see my country which was progressing on the path of the evacuation . . . to see it plunged again in uncertainty, anxiety, in that low esteem the result of instability, is very painful to me, and I only stiffen myself against difficulties to get rid of these fresh misfortunes." [2]

In the game, at once so delicate and important, which was then being played, the movement towards the Right was to provoke immediately a resistance on the Left. M. Thiers was between the two parties in the position of the old man and the two mistresses; they snatched from him alternately contradictory concessions. He lent himself to this

[1] This list shows what had been the character of the different Ministers of Home Affairs since the meeting of the National Assembly: MM. Ernest Picard, Lambrecht, Casimir-Périer and Victor Lefranc.

[2] Letter to the Comte de Saint-Vallier, Dec. 10, 1872. *Occupation et Libération*, ii. p. 139.

game, at once having need of everybody, and aspiring not to allow himself to be captured by anybody.

The Campaign of Petitions

Against the majority of the Right he had a support in the opinion of the country. He thought of utilizing it. Suddenly a vast system of petitions was seen to be organized, demanding the dissolution of the Assembly. It does not appear to be doubtful that M. Leblond, a deputy on the Left and editor of the *Siècle*, which had taken the initiative in the movement, previously consulted the President of the Republic, whose personal friend he was. The latter was by no means displeased to suspend this threat over the head of the Assembly. But the weight of the weapon, perhaps, proved greater than he anticipated.

The signed petitions arrived in bales. There was a talk of a million signatures. The majority, the direct object of attack, could not remain indifferent. Besides the groups were informed and were deliberating.

The Extreme Left declared for dissolution at an early date and by legal methods. The Republican Left declared that "associating itself with the manifestations of public opinion in favour of speedy elections, it approved of the petitions, and that without absolutely excluding the idea of a partial renewal, it would vote for the plan of an integral renewal of the Assembly."

In a manifesto of the 10th of December, the Republican Union demanded "the dissolution of the Assembly by legal ways in order to assure the peaceful triumph of the national will, and the stability of Republican institutions."

The Right thought that it was necessary to cut these manifestations short by a vote, and that the Assembly must at any price affirm its will not to yield to such injunctions. On the 14th of December, on the initiative of M. Lambert Sainte-Croix demanding the discussion of the petitions, the debate opened in a public sitting. It was up to a certain point the counter-stroke to the debate on the Message. In the month of November the President of the Repnblic had been obliged to defend himself before the Assembly; now the Assembly had to explain itself before the country.

M. Gambetta demands Dissolution

M. Gambetta was the man who pronounced the indictment. He was the responsible author of the campaign in favour of dissolution. He had not spoken one single time without concluding with his *Delènda Carthago*. The result of the recent elections emboldened him; he could maintain that the Assembly was at discord with the country, and that it was prolonging its existence unduly and tyrannically. Going yet further, he persisted in denying to the National Assembly the possession of the constituent power.

Reply of the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier

The Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier replied to M. Gambetta. His speech was, as always, ardent, vigorous, aggressive. M. Louis Blanc, in his reply, gave with coolness the exact definition of the situation. "If," said he, "the majority opposes the dissolution, the reason is that it is waiting for the favourable day, the propitious hour, to found the Monarchy, and that during this time the country must resign itself to living a life of uncertainty and fever."

The opinion of the Government was awaited with

impatience. It was judge of the lists. M. Dufaure took up the word.

Intervention of M. Dufaure

In accordance with a strategy long meditated upon with M. Thiers, the Keeper of the Seals ranked himself clearly with the views of the Right, and lavished his biting irony on M. Gambetta and the Left. Like the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, he maintained the theory of the delegation of the sovereignty to the representatives of the nation, and while recognizing the right of petition, he declared that it belonged to the Assembly alone to fix the term of its mandate. For the moment the Government was opposed to dissolution.

The Assembly was used to M. Dufaure and his furious onslaughts; but this last blow brought down heavily upon the Left had a different aim from his usual violence. Accordingly, the surprise was general. Evidently there was a fixed determination on the part of the Government. The Right exulted; it looked on at the triumph of its whole strategy. M. Thiers was capitulating. Its joy could no longer be restrained when M. Dufaure was heard declaring that the Government had decided to continue in this path and to seek an agreement with the majority on constitutional questions. "I have been too much moved," he said, "by the words of the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier not to hope that from the conferences of the Government with the Committee there may issue a resolution favourable to the pacification of the Assembly."

It was voted that the speech of M. Dufaure should be posted in all the Communes. It was everywhere affirmed that this was the abandonment of the Message. A deputy, M. Hèvre, proposed further that the speech of the Keeper of the Seals

should be posted up alongside of the Message of the 13th of November.

The Right believed itself to be master of the victory; it had succeeded in dividing those who supported the Republic in the Assembly: "The great Conservative majority," cried the Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier, "is no longer to be made, it is made."

The Left, which believed itself to be in agreement with the Government on the subject of the petition campaign, and whose chiefs did not consent to take a single step in the direction of forming the constitution, was beaten to the ground. From that time it meditated on its revenge.

As for M. Thiers, retreating foot by foot, losing ground every day, abandoning bit by bit at every encounter a little of his authority and of the confidence with which he formerly inspired both parties, railed at, laughed at, torn by the violence of daily polemics, he continued to live. His ambitions were now limited to that.

IV

Among these stormy debates the Assembly often lost sight of its ordinary legislative work. The great plans of the start which aimed at a kind of re-casting of the political and social system of the nation, were being in a manner drowned in the tedious procedures of the Committees.

Parliamentary Business

The debate on the budget of 1873 showed traces of the agitation of men's minds. Begun on the 27th of November, 1872, and terminated on the 21st of January, 1873, it was marked above all by the insistency with which the Right attacked M. Jules Simon, Minister of Public Instruc-

tion. It was hoped to turn him out as had been done in the case of M. Victor Lefranc, and thus to pluck "the last leaf from the artichoke." But this skilful orator defended himself with such talent and pliancy that it was necessary to give up the idea of subjugating him, for this time.

Meanwhile some good laws were passed. That of the 21st of November, 1872, proposed by M. Dufaure, modifying the formation of the criminal jury, and partly substituting in the constitution of juries the elective influence for the legislative influence; the law of the 21st of December modifying in a Liberal sense the organization of commercial jurisdiction; the law of the 10th of December, 1872, introducing the use of post-cards into France; the law of the 23rd of January, 1873, tending to repress public drunkenness, and to fight the progress of alcoholism; the law of the 10th of February, 1873, passed on the initiative of M. Ambroise Joubert, and having for its aim the reduction of working hours for women and children employed in manufactures.

The great efforts made by the spécial Committee charged with the study of the reform of education, and over which Mgr. Dupanloup exercised a preponderating influence only ended, at the time, in the passing of the law of the 13th of March, 1873, re-establishing the Higher Council of Public Instruction, a law voted on the report of the Duc de Broglie, which enlarged the basis of selection for the Higher Council, taking inspiration from the law of 1850 (Falloux law), and joining to it representatives of Agriculture, Commerce, and Manufactures.

The law of the 18th of February, 1873, due to the initiative of M. Savary, of the Right Centre, deter-

mined the conditions of the majority required in political elections.

Political passions had found more ample pasture in the discussion of the law of December 21, 1872, proposed by the Government, whose object was to cancel the decrees of the 22nd of January, 1852, and to restore to the Orleans family a part of its property representing a sum of about forty millions of francs.

MM. Lepère, Pascal Dupret, and Henri Brisson opposed the Bill which had been prepared for by an article of M. de Montalivet in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (December 1, 1872), and was defended by M. Bocher, M. Robert de Massy, reporter, and M. Laurier, a Republican.

It was the reparation of an act of spoliation committed by the Second Empire. As M. Laurier said, "it was necessary to render justice to the Orleans family as to a simple charcoal-burner despoiled of his property."

None the less this resumption of forty millions by the Orleans family at the time when the financial situation of France was so precarious in consequence of the changes resulting from the war, produced a disagreeable echo in public opinion. As M. Thiers had taken the initiative in the Bill, it was believed that the proof of a secret understanding between the Government and the Princes of Orleans could be seen in it. The Monarchists on the extreme Right were embittered and addressed cutting reproaches to their allies.

Death of Napoleon III

The confusion, already so great, was further increased by a sudden event which occurred on the 9th of January, 1873: the death of Napoleon III at Chislehurst. He was on the point of reaching his sixty-fifth year.

On the 2nd of January, the Emperor, who had been suffering from stone since 1866, had undergone the operation of lithotrity with apparent success. This operation was repeated on the 6th, but the physicians thought it necessary to proceed to a third, perhaps to several other, operations for crushing the stone in order to obtain a complete cure.

On the 7th and 8th the condition of the patient became worse: a third surgical operation was to have been attempted on the 9th at midday. But Napoleon III died that same day on the 9th of January, at 10.45 a.m.

The news of this death hurled confusion into the Bonapartist party. In the National Assembly, M. Rouher was seen to leave his bench hurriedly, a prey to violent emotion.

It was not unknown that Napoleon III had only resigned himself to submitting to the operation which was to cause his death in the hope of soon attempting a kind of return from Elba.[1] The date was fixed for the month of March, 1873. The Bonapartists wished to act before the vote on the constitution which would have forbidden the parties to put legally the question of the form of Government.

For several months the irons had been in the fire. Important politicians, generals, prefects and prelates entered into the conspiracy. M. Rouher had crossed the channel several times to see if the Emperor was in a condition to mount a horse. It is known that in the course of the campaign of 1870, Napoleon III had been obliged to give up following

[1] Count von Beust, *Mémoires*, t. ii. p. 353.

the military operations except in a carriage. At Sedan he had wished to remain on horseback the whole day in spite of the sufferings caused him by the motion of his horse.

Was he still in the same condition? In the month of September, 1872, at the instance of his partisans, Napoleon III, whose fatalism, though somewhat lulled, still lent itself to events, had ridden in the avenues of Chislehurst to estimate the fatigues which he would be able to encounter. A short railway journey confirmed him in the opinion that he could not attempt anything before having undergone the operation for stone. It was then that he entrusted himself to the English surgeons.

Bonapartist Plans

In anticipation of success everything had been organized for the carrying out of the plan in concert with Prince Jerome. In the course of a visit to Cowes necessitated by the imperial convalescence, Napoleon III would simulate a relapse, would embark secretly for Ostend, would make for Cologne, then Bâle, then Nyon. From thence Prince Jerome and the Emperor would cross the lake, disembark at Nernier on the French shore, and then shape their course for Annecy. They hoped to carry the regiment of cavalry which was in garrison in that town. Then they would march on Lyons, where General Bourbaki was in command; he was considered to be won over to the imperial cause. A uniform was waiting for Napoleon at Prangins, the estate of his cousin, Prince Jerome.[1] From Lyons the Emperor would have paraded at the head of the army up to Paris. As

[1] Paul Lenglé, *Le Neveu de Bonaparte*, p. 168.

for the National Assembly, a really heroic method of getting rid of it had been discovered. The Parliamentary train between Paris and Versailles would have been stopped in the Saint-Cloud tunnel, thus transformed into a mouse trap.[1]

A Ministry had been constituted; the Ministry of Home Affairs had been offered to the Comte de Kerstry, a former prefect of the 4th of September. General Fleury was to be appointed military Governor of Paris. It was affirmed that the Russian Ambassador, Prince Orloff, had been won over to the combination and that Prince Bismarck was favourable. Count von Arnim in any case did not conceal his satisfaction.

Faithful to that idea of the first Napoleon, that events in order to find their accomplishment should be expected, the conspirators had let part of their plans transpire to the public. Thus during the month of December, 1872, the rumour having spread that Napoleon III was in Paris, the police were tired out for three days and three nights.

The funeral of the Emperor took place at Chislehurst on the 15th of January, and was the occasion of a general mobilization of the party.

Although the disappearance of Napoleon III annihilated their immediate plans, the Bonapartists did not lose hope. They attached themselves with a fresh ardour to the fortunes of the young prince, who had become the heir to the Imperial claims. He was then seventeen years of age. The Empress Eugénie, to whom the Imperial constitutions confided the regency, assumed the direction of the party

[1] General du Barail, *Mes Souvenirs*, t. iii. p. 322.

pending the majority of him whom they were pleased to call Napoleon IV.

Two currents, however, which had previously existed in a latent condition, were seen from that time to acquire strength in the Bonapartist world. Impelled by the Empress, official Bonapartism approached legitimism and clericalism, while an important fraction inclining to the Left, attached itself to the revolutionary traditions and under the authority of Prince Napoleon founded Jeromism.

New Monarchical Combination

Meanwhile the Royalists had not yet bidden good-bye to their plan, always disappointed, of the fusion between the two branches of the House of Bourbon. In default of the Comte de Chambord they set themselves to work to bring to light the merits of the representative of the House of Orleans, the Comte de Paris. The Duc d'Aumale, who had just lost his only son, the Duc de Guise (July 28, 1872), was living in retirement. The Comte de Paris, younger and more conciliatory, lent himself more readily to the new plans and the new hopes. He had just undertaken a journey in France, where he had visited especially the factories at Fourchambault, at Auzin, at Saint-Gobain; his gentleness was cried up, his industry, his gravity. He was preparing and was soon about to publish (March, 1873) his book upon the position of the working classes in England. He also showed his inclination towards the questions which were going to occupy the foreground among the preoccupations of statesmen.

The Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia had taken upon him to intermediate between the Comte de Chambord and the Comte de Paris. He was so thoroughly convinced of the efficacy of his endea-

vours that on the 17th of January, 1873, he believed himself authorized to affirm the success of the fusion in the course of a discussion in one of the Committees of the National Assembly. He quoted in support of this statement a conversation which he had recently held with the Comte de Paris. The latter had once again protested that the Comte de Chambord would not find a competitor to the throne of France in his own family.

The Orleanist party did not intend to allow itself to be absorbed. It affirmed its programme with more energy than ever. "There exists in France," said M. Edouard Hervé in an article in the *Journal de Paris* corresponding to the Legitimist *Gazette de France*, "a great party which is neither red nor white, which neither wishes for a new revolution nor for a counter-revolution, nor for a return to the ancient social order, nor for the destruction of the existing social order. This party, while repudiating the violence and excesses of the Revolution, accepts and intends to preserve its legitimate results: civil equality, political and religious liberty, constitutional Government."[1]

The situation then remained in reality always the same: the family could unite, but the programmes remained different. The obstinacy of the Comte de Chambord was deplored. Men did not understand why he refused himself with such persistency to the salvation of the dynasty and the country. His scruples were variously understood and interpreted.

Fresh Intervention of Mgr. Dupanloup

Mgr. Dupanloup thought that his intervention had again become opportune: "The ancient Monarchy," he said, "ad-

[1] *Journal de Paris*, Feb. 1, 1872.

Hélioy Dujardin

Mgr Dupanloup

mitted the right of remonstrance: would not the sovereign necessary to France even allow the privilege of entreaty to devotion and patriotism?"

He communicated this idea to his friends. They encouraged him; M. de Falloux was among the most ardent.

After having hesitated for some time, Mgr Dupanloup decided towards the end of January, 1873, to write to the Comte de Chambord. He addressed a strictly confidential letter to the Prince:—

"When one has received from Providence," said the Bishop of Orleans especially, "the mission and the duty to save a people, and when that people is perishing under your eyes, I think, and many of my friends think with me, that in a question of reconciliation there are reciprocal duties. For this question of reconciliation is not only one between the Princes of Orleans and your person, it is between France, the Princes, and you. That is the truth. That is to say that in this question of reconciliation all have their duties and their responsibility. And certainly if ever a country at its last gasp has demanded in him whom Providence has reserved to it as its supreme resource, consideration, clear-sightedness, all possible sacrifices, France sick and dying, certainly is that country. To be deceived on so grave a question, to make impossibilities for oneself, even in obedience to a very noble sentiment, which would not be impossibilities before God, would be the greatest of misfortunes."

The Bishop concluded by adjuring the Prince to seek for light from the Pope on the question of the flag. "I should praise God," said he, "if he inspired you to ask for the advice of the Holy Father in these matters."[1]

And in order not to leave anything to chance, Mgr. Dupanloup wrote to Pius IX on the 23rd of January, 1873, to solicit his intervention.

[1] Abbé Lagrange, *Vie de Mgr. Dupanloup*, t. iii. p. 277–278.

The Bishop of Orleans proposed a compromise. This is what he explains in another letter addressed to Cardinal Antonelli, Secretary of State of the Sovereign Pontiff: "I say a compromise," he writes, "for there are many possible. For example, the Comte de Chambord might, after the example of a great number of his predecessors, have his own royal ensign, and the nation keep its colours. This, for that matter, is what takes place in England, in Prussia, and in most of the States of Europe. Or again he might, as a symbol of the return of the traditional Monarchy to France, sow the tricolour flag with *fleur-de-lys*."

At Rome no more than at Frohsdorff was there any disposition to pay heed to the counsels of Mgr. Dupanloup. The Pope held his peace. As for the Comte de Chambord he did not leave the lively supplications of the Bishop without an answer. A letter dated from Vienna, February 8, 1873, was remitted on the 13th by M. de Blacas to Mgr. Dupanloup.

The latter was chatting at the moment with M. du Boys on the subject of his letter to the Comte de Chambord, and the motives which had inspired that grave step. He went on still holding the letter which had just been given him, then, with a hand trembling with emotion he opened it and began to read. The further he read, the more the colour was seen to rise in his face. When he had finished: "There," said he, "that makes the Republic! Poor France! All is lost."[1]

In fact the letter of the Comte de Chambord, delivered to publicity immediately, expressed in a

[1] Abbé Lagrange, *Vie de Mgr. Dupanloup*, p. 277.

lofty and royally sarcastic tone his regret at not being able to follow the Bishop's advice: "Without prejudice or ill-feeling against persons," he says, "my duty is to preserve in its integrity the hereditary principle which is in my charge; a principle without which, as I shall never cease to repeat, I am now nothing, and with which I can be everything. This is the point which people are unwilling to understand clearly. It is permitted to one to understand from your allusions, my Lord Bishop, that in the first rank of the sacrifices regarded by you as indispensable to meet the prayers of the country, you place the sacrifice of the flag. Now this is a pretext invented by those who, while recognizing the necessity of the return of the traditional Monarchy, wish at least to preserve the symbol of the Revolution."

Speaking of the Princes of Orleans, the Comte de Charbord expressed himself as follows, "I have not learned with less pleasure than the true friends of the country of the presence of the Princes, my cousins, at the expiatory chapel on the 21st of January, for in going to offer public prayer in that building consecrated to the memory of the martyr king, they must have felt in all its fulness the influence of a place so proper to great lessons and generous aspirations."

Lastly, he finished as follows: "I have neither sacrifice to make nor conditions to receive. I expect little from the skill of men, and much from the justice of God."

Thus the stone of Sisyphus fell back once again upon the heads of those who endeavoured to raise it. The letter was terrible, the allusion to the vote of Philippe-Egalité cutting; it recalled in a single

word all the causes of dissension which had been perpetrated in the royal family for three generations.

A new tentative entrusted to the skill of the Princess Clementine d'Orléans, who was closely connected with the family of Modena, was no more successful. Matters were desperate.

Death of the Emperor Napoleon, obstinacy of the Comte de Chambord, public evolution of M. Thiers, everything seemed to conspire in favour of the Republic. Meanwhile the Right refused to accept conviction. With a perseverance worthy of a happier future, it continued to fight, blindly, for a cause which seemed to be irremediably lost.

V

Confidences of a Royalist

The Vicomte de Meaux enumerates in his memoirs, not without a certain melancholy, the causes which interposed the check to the Monarchist policy in the National Assembly: "To complete the disgrace," he says somewhere, "about the same time there appeared one of those letters by which the Comte de Chambord was accustomed to frustrate our efforts and shatter our hopes; he declared himself ready, if he remounted the throne, to re-establish the temporal power of the Pope. So many motives or pretexts for accusing Royalists and Catholics of wishing for war, and of wishing for it on behalf of the Pope. . . . The prejudice was propagated and took root. We were to find it still in vitality six years afterwards, and more fatal to our candidates than any other."

The Roman Question

The same writer also throws part of the blame upon the bishops. "They demanded a vote from the Assembly which would

have embroiled us with Italy, a step,—I do not know what it was, and they knew as little about it themselves—in favour of the temporal power of the Pope. . . . What could M. Thiers do then, and what could we do? Did the bishops wish to provoke a quarrel with Italy, which would evidently have been supported by Germany? Certainly not; and when they proclaimed their peaceful intentions, they were as honest as they were inconsistent. But they did not feel their responsibility for the country; and without asking themselves whether they were not driving us either to a precipice, or to an ignoble retreat, they afforded satisfaction to themselves, they and their circle."

After the check to the debate with reference to the petition of the bishops, the Catholic party did not disarm. They accused the majority of the Assembly of treason or at least of lukewarmness, which in fact followed on this point the guidance of a bishop, Mgr. Dupanloup.

A veritable pain as to the situation and sufferings of the Pope spread in the Catholic masses and rose from thence to the Assembly. The "Roman question" further complicated the so complex situation in which France was struggling towards the end of the year 1872. In reality a new consequence of the war was the matter in concern, which applied to questions that deeply interested the heart of the country. The question was whether to sustain or abandon a policy of ages. For the Catholics above all stood the question of the independence of their faith.

Pope Pius IX, frightened, without an army, without support, had been obliged to shut himself up in the Vatican. No one of the Catholic Powers

was in a position to help him. France was invaded; Spain had Amadeus of Savoy as her King; Austria was devoid of resolution and force. The situation of the Pope was really terrible. The emotion of the crowds of believers may be understood, who had long been deeply affected by the suave goodness of Pius IX and the long vicissitudes of his reign.

It was further necessary to look forward to another event of the deepest gravity for the destinies of the Church and the Catholic religion. If the Pope happened to die (he was at that time eighty years of age) in what conditions as regards independence would the meeting of the Conclave and the election of the future Pope take place, at a time when the Palace traditionally devoted to this purpose, the Quirinal, was under Italian jurisdiction?

M. Thiers offers the Pope the Chateau of Pau

M. Thiers had always shown himself an alert defender of the French policy at Rome. He understood better than anybody the importance of the facts which were in progress and which might damage the independence of the Sovereign Pontiff; he had caused an asylum in the castle of Pau to be offered to the Pope with the necessary budget to support the pontifical charges.

Could he do more? In the situation in which France was, should he expose himself to a rupture with Italy? Italy was then openly drawing near to Germany, and preparing her entrance into the Triple Alliance. Prince Bismarck was in the heat of the conflict with the Roman Church. France was then passing through the critical phase in which her foreign policy was to struggle in the

sequel of the war. Could he accept the risks and provoke the complications which an intervention in the Roman question could not fail to excite ?

M. Thiers held the balance between the Vatican and the Quirinal even, as far as he could. To the Quirinal he had accredited a *chargé d'affaires*, M. Fournier, a declared partisan of the accomplished facts. M. Thiers has written : "When the Pope complained to us of some difficulty coming from the Italian Government, I addressed myself to the King through M. Visconti-Venosta and I obtained such satisfaction as was possible and just." [1] France had as Ambassador to the Pope the Comte Bernard d'Harcourt, very devoted to the Holy Father. Furthermore, the French Government kept the frigate *L'Orénoque*, at Civita Vecchia, placed at the disposal of the Pope. But the situation was such that conflicts on matters of detail happened every day.

The Pope suffered much from it ; naturally irritable and quick-tempered, he complained ; he even complained of his friends ; he complained of M. Thiers. A moving narrative shows him to us in the kind of simple cell in which he had taken refuge in the upper stories of the Vatican. No furniture except a little iron bed, narrow and low, without valances or curtains. The walls are white and bare ; a washboard along which were ranged ten or twelve pairs of white slippers ; a mahogany desk ; one chair for a visitor : " No other furniture or object whatever in the room, except a copper candlestick with three candles and a little coloured engraving of the Virgin in a photograph frame.

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 377.

The Pope was ordinarily seated with his back to the light entirely clothed in white; sometimes he raised himself painfully, leaning on a strong cane and slowly traversing the length of the room he would stop in front of the window, from which he looked mournfully upon the enclosures of the Vatican, and further on, Rome, the Tiber, the wooded hills of the Villa Pamphili." [1]

Sufferings of Pius IX

The irascible and powerless old man persisted in the struggle, sometimes announcing his departure, and causing it to be hurriedly prepared, so much so that one day, on his leaving his room to repair to his library, leaning on the arm of the French *chargé d'affaires*, the rumour of the decision spread in the palace, then in Rome, and provoked universal alarm; sometimes he resigned himself to remaining, conscious of the strength added by the name of Rome to the Catholic grandeur, and he decided to present to the world the moving spectacle of the Master of Souls a voluntary prisoner. He received delegations arriving from all parts of the world, and in their presence he uttered words which in the ears of Catholics were like "coals of fire heaped up on the heads of his persecutors." He spoke to the German Catholics: "Be confident, united; for a pebble will fall from the mountain and will break the feet of the colossus." These words profoundly irritated Prince Bismarck.

Emotion of French Catholics

In France they doubled the emotion. Community in misfortune creates a kind of solidarity. Notably in the Assembly, where the Catholic tendencies were numerous and

[1] See the clever work of the Baron des Michels, *Souvenirs de Carrière*, p. 46.

active, the prudence and reserve of M. Thiers were sharply attacked. An incident happened in January, 1873. M. Thiers decided that the crew of the *Orénoque*, which after all was stationed in Italian waters, should pay the customary visit both to the Pope and to the King. The Pope protested. The French Ambassador, the Baron de Bourgoing, recently accredited to him in place of the Comte Bernard d'Harcourt, sent in his resignation. The situation was such that it seemed there was going to be a rupture of relations between France and Rome. Cardinal Antonelli, Secretary of State, far from attenuating the crisis, seemed to wish to develop it. He knew that the Catholics held a majority in the National Assembly, and he counted on using the threat of a hostile vote to bring M. Thiers to terms.

Pius IX then showed himself but little inclined to accept a successor to M. de Bourgoing.

M. Thiers was in danger. In the strained situation in which he found himself in relation to the Committee of Thirty, a hostile vote meant his downfall, and that, too, at the moment when he caught sight of the possibility of a final negotiation with Germany for the liberation of the territory.

On the 6th of January, General du Temple and the Baron de Belcastel demanded to interpellate the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the facts relative to the resignation of our Ambassador to the Holy See at Rome. M. de Belcastel himself said at the Tribune that "the moving of his interpellation would have a salutary effect upon the line followed at Rome by the Government."

Rome bends

Thus the fate of the Government of M. Thiers was suspended on this debate.

Happily, his foresight had taken the first start. He had sent to Rome a young diplomatist, shrewd and cautious, who had already known how to win the good graces of the Pope, the Baron des Michels. The latter had seen M. Fournier; he had seen Cardinal Antonelli; he had seen the Pope; he had returned rapidly to Paris, and after a clear exposition of the situation, he had come to take the orders of M. Thiers. The President decided to play with the Vatican "with open cards," and he proposed to the Pope that he should himself choose from a list of four personalities, all devoted to the Holy See, the French Ambassador who would please him. This was the starting point of a policy of appeasement if not of agreement. The proposal was carried back to Rome by the same emissary. It was at first rejected. "At the moment when I was beginning to lose hope," says M. des Michels, "His Holiness had me summoned, and addressed to me with a certain solemnity, although in melancholy and resigned tone, the following words, which I noted down in pencil on leaving the audience and even before quitting the Palace: 'I do not wish that people may be able to say that the Head of the French Government suffers (*sic*) from difficulties which the Sovereign Pontiff might have avoided for him. I consent then to give M. Thiers the evidence of a good understanding which he demands of me. Take back to Versailles the official assurance that the choice of M. de Corcelles has my full consent, and that the new Ambassador will receive at the Vatican the same welcome which the Comte d'Harcourt has always found there."

Thus M. Thiers escaped the Parliamentary and international difficulty. But this success was

bitter to him, for it was the last act of a traditional policy: the Powers left their Ambassadors to the Pope, but the Pope remained "a prisoner" at the Vatican.

The appointment of M. de Corcelles appeared on the 12th of January. In the Assembly the announced interpellation took place on the 15th of January. M. Dufaure, Vice-President of the Council, replied in the name of the Government. He epitomized the arrangement accepted by Rome in a single phrase, in which he explained how delicate was the situation of France, obliged to have "a representative" at Rome with the territorial sovereign of Italy, recognized by the whole of Europe, and with whom she had a lively desire always to preserve good relations, and another representative with the Holy See charged to make protestations to the venerable Head of the religion professed by the great majority of Frenchmen of all their sentiments of respect and devotion. He declared further that the policy of France, as M. Thiers had expounded it to the Assembly in connexion with the discussion on the petition of the bishops, had not changed.

A month later, on the 13th of February, 1873, General du Temple tried to re-open the debate on the Roman question in connexion with national foundations and properties which we possess at Rome, and which were then menaced by the Italian law as to religious corporations.

But the Assembly, at the request of M. de Rémusat, Minister of Foreign Affairs, refused to enter again upon this dangerous ground, and in view of the evident sentiments of the majority, the author of the plan of interpellation withdrew it.

In Spain Amadeus of Savoy, who had reigned since the 16th of November, 1870, abdicated on the 11th of February, 1873, and went back to Italy, embarking at Lisbon ; the Republic was proclaimed in the Cortes by 256 votes to 32. These events, in which France was in no wise concerned, had none the less a certain repercussion upon French politics. If the Republican example appeared to be crossing the frontiers it was likely to raise dynastic apprehensions and coalitions against France.

VI

M. Thiers and the Committee of Thirty

M. Thiers saw the spring of the year 1873 arrive in the midst of the gravest apprehensions external and internal. The Right of the Assembly, rendered desperate by the check to the different combinations tending to the re-establishment of the Monarchy, fell upon the President, and evidently had the design of revenging itself upon him for its disappointments; the Left, no less discontented, accused him of playing a double game. He fought, foot by foot, against the Committee of Thirty. He kept an attentive eye upon the procedures of each of the Pretenders. He struggled in the contradictions of the Roman question. He asked himself if the fixed line taken by the Right in favour of the Papacy was not further to complicate the already difficult relations with Germany at the time when the Cultur-Kampf was in full swing. His impatient longing to see the payment of the indemnity soon settled was hampered by a secret malevolence, which he failed clearly to distinguish, that of the German Ambassador at Paris. In the month of September, 1872,

M. de Saint Vallier had warned him of the delicate position in which the Ambassador stood: "M. de Bismarck feels no objection to saying that he has not found in the Ambassador at Paris those qualities which he expected of him, and one evening, when Count Orloff and General von Manteuffel were dining with him privately, the Chancellor said aloud in their presence: 'That Arnim has now been asking me for an audience for a fortnight; I must, however, give it him in the end.'"[1] Still M. Thiers fought courageously, having only one consolation, that of seeing the gradual payments of the different accounts of the indemnity succeed one another regularly at the appointed dates. The prolongation of the German occupation occasioned serious difficulties in the Eastern provinces. Berlin also affected some anxiety on seeing the star of Gambetta rising. He was represented as being the future instrument of the revenge; M. de Saint-Vallier wrote: "The black spot, there as elsewhere, is always M. Gambetta; his name inspires an aversion which is strengthened with fresh forces . . . M. de Redern, a confidential friend of the Emperor, is said to have remarked: "The arrival of that man to power is equivalent in our eyes to the advent of the Revolution, a thing which we would not allow to happen."[2]

M. Thiers resumes the Liberation

On the 2nd of February he wrote to M. de Saint-Vallier: "As for our financial situation, here it is: we shall have

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. pp. 50 and 124.

[2] *Ibid.* October 14th, p. 83. M. Thiers replied, on the 17th of October, to the passage aimed at Gambetta: "M. Gambetta will not succeed. The country has taken a dislike to him . . . The movement is democratic in France, as it is in the whole of Europe, and especially in Germany, but by no means demagogic" (*Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. p. 220).

the fourth milliard (at 5 per cent.) on the 1st of May; we shall have at that period a great part of the fifth and last milliard without having recourse to financial guarantees. For the remainder of this fifth milliard, the feeblest treasury operation, concerning ourselves alone, will permit us to acquit ourselves in full. There will remain to be settled the exact dates and the method of the complete evacuation."

Thus by the simplest calculations and the clearest evidence it resulted that France could be ready at very short notice. She was in advance by two years on the delays foreseen by the Convention of the 29th of June, 1872. With what joy could the President of the Republic have made these fresh overtures! With what anxiety he waited for an answer may be guessed.

Overtures to Germany for the Anticipation of the payment

The question was again opened: would Germany consent to accept in anticipation the accounts on the new dates which were sufficiently indicated to her, and then under what conditions would the progressive, and soon complete, evacuation of the territory be settled? In order to obtain a fresh indication M. Thiers made use of the way by Nancy, which had always appeared to him the easiest and the most efficacious.

Now at the very moment when M. Thiers wrote this letter, Prince Bismarck had on his own account made the first start. The line which he had now taken and declared with reference to his Ambassador brought him nearer to M. Thiers. On the 15th of January, 1873, Bleichroeder had had a very confidential interview with M. de Gontaut-Biron: "The "governor," he had said, "is not satisfied with the

way of seeing and general attitude of his *Attorney* at Paris. It is evident that a game is being played between the Chancellor on one side, Count Eulenburg and the King himself, very probably, on the other side. Count von Arnim is said to be suspected by the Chancellor of being hostile to him. He thinks that Count von Arnim aims at supplanting him. . . . It is said that if the King made up his mind to separate from Prince Bismarck, the latter would be forgotten in three months. . . ."

Bismarck found a further proof of the ill-will of the Ambassador in the negotiations upon which M. Thiers was ready to enter. On the 30th of January he had directed Count von Arnim to try to discover what the intentions of the French Government were on the subject of fresh proposals for evacuation. As often happens in well conducted affairs, the two initiatives were contemporaneous. But Count von Arnim had a way of carrying out his instructions which once again threatened to leave the negotiation in suspense. He said nothing.

Fortunately, the procedure which M. Thiers had followed in applying to Nancy was a guarantee against the infidelities or ill will of the German Ambassador. M. de Gontaut-Biron, warned, acted on his side at Berlin. There some anxiety prevailed as to the solidity of the Government of M. Thiers. However, after M. Dufaure's speech, Bismarck had believed in a durable reconciliation between the majority and M. Thiers. He had said, laughing, to M. de Gontaut-Biron, whose connexions with the Right he knew: "There is no other line to take except to support the order of things as they are: you must keep Adolphe I." [1]

[1] Duc de Broglie, *La Mission de M. de Gontaut-Biron à Berlin*, p. 69.

An appreciable change had taken place in the attitude of Prince Bismarck. In proportion as he had shown himself slow and suspicious in the preceding spring, so he was now to show himself eager and "a straightforward man of business" in this last phase of the negotiation. Was it the satisfaction of hitting his mark and of being able at length to show the world a finished work? Was it the sentiment of authority in Europe won by the episode of the Three Emperors and the approaching visit to Berlin of King Victor Emmanuel? Was it, as has been said, the need felt by Prince Bismarck of being able to announce the approaching and complete payment of the indemnity to the Reichstag, of which the session was about to open and in which he foresaw great difficulties? Or, perhaps, did he take into account the probable fall of the Gladstone Cabinet in England, and its replacement by a Disraeli Ministry more decided to interfere in the great affairs of Europe? Whatever it was that determined him, he showed himself disposed to bring matters quickly to an end. He wrote in this sense on the 5th of February to General von Manteuffel. He even expressed surprise at not having yet received any reply from Paris in consequence of the action which he prescribed to Count von Arnim. General von Manteuffel warned Paris through M. de Saint-Vallier. He added that Bismarck was coming out of the crisis, which he himself provoked, more powerful than ever.

Whence was the delay to come now? It was to come from the uncertainty which reigned afresh as to the situation in Paris, in consequence of the lingering procedure of the Committee of Thirty,

of the more and more evident precariousness of the Government of M. Thiers.

This was the question on the order of the day at Berlin, and it was by somewhat annoying allusions to the situation of M. Thiers that a last effort at resistance was set in motion. On the 1st of February, M. de Gontaut-Biron reported on an interview which he had had with Count Redern, who had come to the Embassy on behalf of the Emperor : " In the eyes of the Emperor the prolongation of the occupation would be useful to prevent revolutionary agitations." M. de Gontaut-Biron protested loudly, " The Departments were only occupied to serve as a guarantee for the payment of the indemnity," nothing else. Redern insisted, he spoke of Gambetta, and added : " The understanding with the Right must be arrived at. All depends on M. Thiers ; the understanding between Germany and France is in his hands." On the following day at the opera the Emperor himself returned to the question. To the allusions made by the Ambassador to a speedy payment and a speedy evacuation he replied evasively : " We shall see ; everything must be settled at its own time." In these delays and allusions the influence of the correspondence of Arnim is felt.

Von Redern saw M. de Gontaut-Biron again. The latter pressed his interviewer hard : " Why these dilatory speeches ? In France many people think that you will attack us as soon as we have paid the deposit of the war indemnity." [1]

It was now Von Redern's turn to protest : " Attack you ? Why ? To what end ? Where would be our interest ? No, no, don't believe a word of it." But

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. pp. 182, 192.

he returned to the reconstitution of the French army. He complained again. M. de Gontaut-Biron replied with much sagacity: "Everybody is arming at the present moment." And Von Redern, obliged to make an admission, said: "It must be admitted; it is a calamity. It was talked of here at the interview of the Three Emperors, but nobody showed any anxiety to disarm. Each declared that he intended to do the cleaning of his own doorstep himself."

M. Thiers was overwhelmed with work and anxiety.

His health even seemed to be threatened. One day he was seized with a syncope which frightened his circle, and the alarm caused by it spread even to Berlin. Count von Arnim seized upon all these incidents to excite mistrust and justify his own slackness. Prince Bismarck was obliged to put him back into the right path: "I consider it necessary," he wrote to him, on the 20th of January, 1873, "to oppose my own opinion to the judgments of Your Excellency on M. Thiers, which seem to me unjust, because differences of opinion on the statesman who is guiding France lead Your Excellency to a policy different from mine, even at a time when in principle it would not have that intention."

De Gontaut-Biron acts on the Committee

On the other hand, M. de Gontaut-Biron saw himself obliged to give his friends on the Committee of Thirty a serious warning: "You are," he sent word to them, "by way of losing the ground which you have gained during these last months. . . . The foreign policy of M. Thiers, his efforts to restore order at home, to reconstitute the finances, and even the army, have inspired a real sympathy for him, even an honest

admiration. . . . The long and subtle discussions of the Committee are not understood. . . . Do not try to render my task more difficult than it already is. . . . The continuation and accentuation of the discord produce an unfavourable effect here, the counter-stroke of which we cannot fail to feel in the negotiations relative to the liberation of the territory."[1]

It is easily understood that under these conditions all attention was absorbed by the constitutional debate in progress before the Committee of Thirty. The governmental authority of M. Thiers, even his personality, were at stake, and at the same time that cause of the liberation to which he had devoted himself entirely.

It is very necessary to define the positions taken on one side and on the other, and the conditions of the kind of hand-to-hand fight in which the fate of the country was at stake. The Committee, although Royalist in the majority, had neither the hope nor the wish to bring matters immediately to a Monarchical solution; it had not conceived the design, for the moment, of bringing down the Republic; it by no means aspired to abandon the provisional arrangement; it wished even to continue it, but on the condition of subordinating it to its own ends. With M. Thiers the time that was passing was profitable to Republican institutions; since it was impossible to stop the clock and return to those hours, always regretted, when the Bordeaux Compact left the field open to all the combinations of the Right, it would have been glad at least to tie

[1] Duc de Broglie, *La Mission de M. de Gontaut-Biron à Berlin*, p. 75.

the hands of the skilful and dangerous old man, to hold him either in devotion, or at its mercy.

He profited by the visible embarrassment of the Committee; he only thought of obtaining from the majority by these means concessions on which he would afterwards rest to stiffen himself against it. Not being able to live without it, nor with it, he hoped to live beside it and against it. It was a kind of perpetual feat of skill to which he condemned himself in order to last out and pursue the work which he had undertaken so long as his strength permitted him.

Struggle between M. Thiers and the Committee

There was then, for two months and a half, between M. Thiers and M. Dufaure on the one side, and the Committee on the other, a struggle which at first heated public opinion, then finished by leaving it indifferent. But by reason even of these delays the uneasiness did but increase.

According as the affairs of the Monarchy were in bad or good trim, discord or harmony reigned alternately. M. Thiers had frequent conversations with the sub-committees, and was heard four times by the full Committee.

January, February, passed away in the search "for a field of mutual understanding." Although M. Thiers had, somewhat disrespectfully, styled as "chineseries" the formalities with which it was proposed for the future to surround his hearing by the Assembly, he himself inclined towards the idea of a compromise. In February, 1873, relates M. Jules Simon, he was thinking of nothing but completing the liberation of the territory: "I have not," said he, "to concern myself with the rest, for as soon as the convention is signed the majority will declare

in a noble decree that I have deserved well of the country, and will consign me to the tomb."[1]

Continually harassed by this exhaustive struggle, he went on with his negotiations for the great business, which henceforth occupied all his thoughts. Would only the time and authority necessary for the conclusion be left to him? At the beginning of February he opened both at Paris and at Nancy simultaneously the decisive negotiations on the subject of the evacuation: "I saw Count von Arnim on the 4th of February," he writes to M. de Saint-Vallier, "and began the conferences. He was more amiable than usual. . . . What I proposed to him by way of a preliminary suggestion susceptible of discussion was to take a mean term, as for example the following: "The second milliard being paid in May, the two Departments, which would then be owing to us, would not be evacuated, but in return for this the evacuation of the two other Departments would be advanced by a period equivalent to that by which we should have prolonged the occupation of the Vosges and the Ardennes. The evacuation would then be operated in one single movement while the payment of the third milliard was being completed (the third milliard remaining to be paid, that is to say, really the fifth). Thus, for example, if the second milliard were paid on the 1st of May and the third on the 1st of September, the complete evacuation would take place on the 1st of August." It is hardly to be believed that Count von Arnim still abstained from transmitting this clear proposal to Berlin. Bismarck, warned through Nancy, was compelled to confess the ill will of his Ambassador, and asked for more definite details.

[1] Jules Simon, t. ii. p. 361.

In the letter which he wrote on the 5th of February to General von Manteuffel he declared that "the term of the definitive evacuation is no longer very distant." He asked for details as to the practical conditions under which it could be accomplished. Von Treskow said on the same day to M. de Gontaut-Biron "that the evacuation without financial guarantees for the month of August is thought of," and the latter immediately informed M. Thiers.

At last, on the 18th of February, in a letter which he wrote to General von Manteuffel, Bismarck recognized that Count von Arnim did not keep him faithfully informed, and that there was a point of essential divergence between the overtures transmitted by the latter and the proposals of M. Thiers, which came through the Nancy channel. He demanded explanations.[1]

Meanwhile on the side of Germany a reservation was seen to be taking definite shape, which had long haunted the mind of M. Thiers. It might be in relation to Belfort, which Germany would retain as a pledge. Why? How long? These were the torturing questions which obtruded themselves on the President's mind. Let us allow him to speak again.

Alarm of M. Thiers with reference to Belfort

"People are not wanting who say that, when everything is paid, a pretext will be found for keeping Belfort, and making war upon us. I do not believe it at all; but meanwhile our duty is to contemplate even the most improbable question when a matter so grave is at stake, which is no less than peace or war, or perhaps the ruin of our country itself. . . .

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. p. 233.

There are things which we should never appear to believe possible, and of which, in consequence, we should not speak. . . . In Southern Germany above all it is believed, because there is a wish to believe it, that Belfort will not be restored to us. I am convinced that Prussia would not dare to commit such an infamous act in the face of Europe. . . . Meanwhile I comport myself like Fontenelle, who was asked if he believed in ghosts, and said that he did not believe in them, but that he was afraid of them."

And M. Thiers, "who is turning over in his head every possible manner of acting so as to get us out of it," ends by asking M. de Gontaut-Biron if the latter could not go and find the Emperor and address him as follows: "Sir, you are better than a great king; you are an honourable man. I am an honourable man too. Well! should I deceive my country by telling it that it can pay, and, its money once given, its territory will be restored, all its territory?" "I am sure," adds M. Thiers, "that the accents of an honourable man like yourself will be all-powerful too, and that in holding the word of the King himself given to a perfectly honourable man we shall be able to hand over the substance of our country so as to get its territory." [1]

M. Thiers was absorbed in his struggle with the Committee of Thirty. Count von Arnim did not cease to exaggerate, at Berlin, the difficulties, and to prognosticate the approaching fall of the President. Bismarck became anxious. M. Thiers, on his side, calculated that a success in the Committee would strengthen his position at Berlin. His

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. p. 210.

days and nights were consumed in this ceaseless play of responsibilities and anxieties.

He wrote on the 9th of February to M. de Gontaut-Biron, and affected a confidence which perhaps he no longer shared himself: "The one single danger is to spoil the elections by giving plausible pretexts to those who claim that there is a wish to overturn the Republic, which, for that matter, nobody can replace. As for the reign of the Radicals, it is far off, very far off, and it would require mountains of mistakes on the part of the Right to bring in M. de Barodet and his friends! . . ."

The President was particularly exasperated by the claim of the Committee to reduce him to silence. He overwhelmed it with his petulant sallies. What did they want to make of him? "A soldier with his sabre nailed to his back?" . . . "A store pig in the residence at Versailles. . . ." "A political marionette!!!"

At last he thought it his duty to yield. He approached, somewhat coldly, it is true, the Duc de Broglie, who led the Committee at his pleasure. But he wanted, in any case, to make something out of his concession. He would accept the "chineseries" of the Committee, if the latter, on the other hand, adopted an additional clause drawn up in the Council of Ministers, and proposing that at an early date there should be a constitutional arrangement by special laws: 1st, on the method of electing the future Assembly; 2nd, on the attributes of a second Chamber; 3rd, on the organization of the Executive Power for the period which would elapse between the dissolution of the existing Chamber and the constitution of the two new Chambers.

The Committee displayed horror at this clause.

M. Ernoul declares that the words "at an early date" sounded in his ears "like a passing bell." The additional clause was immediately rejected. Everything had to be begun again.

In spite of all, the men of clearest judgment did not despair of a settlement. "The business is too serious," said M. Batbie wittily, "not to get settled." In fact, that is what actually happened. Suddenly, on the 19th of February, the Committee turned round and adopted by nineteen votes to seven the clause proposed by the Government and modified in the following manner:

The National Assembly shall not separate without having legislated:

1. On the organization of the Legislative and Executive Powers.
2. On the creation and organization of a second Chamber.
3. On the electoral law.

The duty of bringing forward Bills on the three points thus enumerated was left to the Government. Thus was laid the first course of the future Republican constitution.

What had happened? Once again the hopes of the Monarchists as to the near success of the fusion had vanished away. The letter of the Comte de Chambord to Mgr. Dupanloup had been interposed. The Orleanists, tired of dragging themselves at the heels of the Legitimists, had understood that there were no longer any tactics to be adopted except to gain time. Either the Comte de Chambord would be tired out, or they would submit to their destiny.

Masters of the majority in the Committee of Thirty, they had then voted for the plan which the Government favoured. Thus giving the slip to the Legitimist party for the first time, they found

themselves by a kind of fatality, which was to pursue them to the end, working at the consolidation of the Republic.

The Duc de Broglie, appointed reporter, read his report to the National Assembly on the 21st of February, 1873. All questions of principle being reserved, the plan was limited at present, as M. Ricard wittily said, to settling the ceremonial of the entrance of the President of the Republic into the Chamber, and of his exit.

The Compromise

When M. Thiers wished to be heard by the Assembly he was to make the request by a message. Immediately after the reading of the Message, the debate was to be suspended, and the President was to be heard on the following day, except in the case of a formal vote to the contrary. The sitting was to be adjourned after the Presidential speech, and the debate was not to be resumed except at a further sitting not attended by the President of the Republic.

This was the first clause of the Bill. Clause 2 settled the manner of the promulgation of laws and consecrated the President's right of *veto*. Clause 3 specified that the President's *veto* could not "be applied to the decrees by which the National Assembly shall exercise the constituent power which it has reserved to itself in the preamble of the Bill."

Clause 4 organized ministerial responsibility by specifying that interpellations are addressed not to the President of the Republic, but to the Ministers. The President, however, could be heard in the debates on interpellations or on petitions relative to external policy.

In interpellations relative to internal policy the President of the Republic could also be heard if,

by a special deliberation, the Council of Ministers declared that the questions raised were connected with general policy and involved the responsibility of the Head of the State.

Lastly, the enacting clause introduced into the Bill on the request of the Government, and relating to the constitutional organization, was adopted by the Committee after all, and formed the fifth and last clause.

The reading of the Duc de Broglie's report was welcomed by applause from the Left Centre, by a chilly silence on the Right, and by murmurs and protests from the Legitimists. "It is an abdication and an act of servility!" shouted M. Hervé de Saisy.

The animosity of the Legitimists was at that time so fierce against the Orleanists that the *Correspondance Saint-Chéron*, a semi-official organ of their party, published a letter ending in these words: "If the Princes of Orleans do not seek to consign the past of their family and the revolution of July to oblivion, they will expose themselves to the loss of their hereditary rights to the throne after the eventual reign of Henri V."

The Compromise concluded between the Government and the Committee to annul M. Thiers reserved the future. It aspired to make the bed ready for a constitutional King by organizing ministerial responsibility. By suppressing the direct action of M. Thiers upon the Assembly and upon the country, it would render his replacement possible at an early date by a personage enjoying neither his weight nor political capacity.

The discussion on the Bill begun in public sitting on the 27th of February, continued without brilliancy and without serious interest till the 13th of

March, 1873. The question was exhausted; each group set forth by the mouth of its chief orators doctrines or opinions of no great interest because the positions were taken.

M. de Marcère, M. de Castellane, M. Haentjens, M. Gambetta, M. de Laboulaye, M. Ricard, took part in the debate.

Invited by MM. Le Royer and Bertault to make his opinion known, M. Thiers took up the word in the sitting of the 4th of March. The President of the Republic tried to reconcile the Bordeaux Compact with the Message of the 13th of November, to maintain the balance between Right and Left, congratulated himself on his agreement with the Committee of Thirty, and showed himself, above everything else, desirous of obtaining a majority.

Lastly, on the 13th of March, 1873, by 407 votes to 225, the law was passed. For the general public, what appeared to be most clear was that M. Thiers was removed from the tribune.

In the report on the Rivet constitution (August 31, 1871), M. Vitet, a member of the majority, thus judged in anticipation the work which the National Assembly had now just accomplished. "If, out of respect for principles, we were going to propose to France that henceforth her incomparable orator shall no longer open his mouth and only speak by Message, France would be tempted to laugh, and I do not wish to say what she would think of us."

The Negotiations with Germany

While the labours of the Committee of Thirty dragged on to produce this miserable result, the misunderstanding which had at first occurred between Paris and Berlin had been dispelled, thanks to the obliging

communications which had taken place at Nancy. It was affirmed at Berlin that nothing remained over but to convince the King. On the 1st of March M. de Gontaut-Biron telegraphs: "I dined this evening with Bismarck. He has submitted the proposals of M. Thiers to the Emperor. He hopes in one or two days from this time to obtain the consent of His Majesty to the evacuation of the whole territory on the 1st of July; Belfort and its canton alone remain occupied until the full payment of the fifth milliard." [1] On the 2nd of March, Prince Bismarck had addressed the following telegram to General von Manteuffel to be communicated to M. de Saint-Vallier:

I have just submitted to the king the proposals contained in the letter from M. Thiers to M. de Saint-Vallier, and his Majesty has ordered me to inform you that he accepts the proposals of his Excellency the President of the Republic. Instructions to this effect have been sent to Count von Arnim. However, by reason of certain apprehensions of disorder existing in France among the general public, the newspapers and the Assembly at the moment of our departure (here again was found the effect of the Ambassador's allegations), the town of Belfort, which is not part of the four Departments, will have to remain under our occupation until the complete payment, but in order to be evacuated immediately afterwards.

Reservation as to Belfort

Here then we have the reservation with regard to Belfort, the Belfort "infamy," which M. Thiers had been dreading for so long. What a catastrophe at the moment when it was thought that the end was come! Everything was again in question. Suspicions, apprehensions were only too well founded. The Head Quarter Staff wins the day: there is no intention

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. p. 250.

to restore this town to France, or, at least, it is kept as a supreme guarantee and last means of exerting pressure.

Meanwhile General von Manteuffel went bail for the perfect loyalty of Germany. "He declared to me, *on his honour*, the Comte de Saint-Vallier wrote on the 3rd of March, that his Government had never had a weakness for keeping Belfort, for violating a solemn treaty in the face of Europe and the world; lastly, that he replied to me that Belfort would be evacuated on the very day of the complete payment. He conjured me to transmit his words to you, adding: 'M. Thiers knows that I am an honourable man, and that I should not put myself forward if I did not think I could do so loyally.'"[1]

Bismarck himself protested to M. de Gontaut-Biron against the intentions which were attributed to him. He thought them injurious. Besides, *it was to take or leave.* Von Manteuffel wrote to Saint-Vallier on the 10th of March this letter, written for M. Thiers: "I have received a telegram, which proves to me that there is not the shadow of an idea in Bismarck's head of a wish to tamper with the treaties and to keep Belfort under any pretext whatever. . . . Belfort will be returned to you upon the last payment. . . . I think that we Prussians make a political mistake in not showing sufficient confidence in you Frenchmen. Do not fall into the same error by feeling mistrust on behalf of Belfort."

M. Thiers began to feel reassured; but he was afraid that the effect produced upon public opinion would weaken the satisfaction, which was about to

[1] *Occupation et Libération*, t. ii. pp. 261–291.

be caused by the publication of the convention. He declared that he was ready to sign; he made however one last effort, and begged that the reservation formulated might be abandoned.

Berlin wanted to be done with the business, and Bismarck, not without temper, proposed to substitute Verdun for Belfort. In spite of the hostility to M. Thiers felt by Count von Arnim, who went so far as to keep before him the text of the definitive convention, which he was ordered to communicate, from the 3rd of March, in spite of the disquieting reports which were spread as to the President's health, and which, for a moment, alarmed Berlin, agreement was about to be achieved.

The decisive interview took place on the 11th of March at Berlin between M. de Gontaut-Biron and Prince Bismarck. The latter was overwhelmed with work, being engaged in the gravest debates before Parliament. He foresaw religious and parliamentary difficulties; he wished to have his head free. He spoke to the Ambassador with vivacity: "We do not get any further," he said; "they write astounding things to me from Paris as to the sentiments which prevail in France and at Paris with reference to us. The French stray singularly into the domain of fancy. There are many of them, so it appears, who in good faith suspect us of secret thoughts on the subject of the treaty which we have signed with you. It is pretended that we shall not execute it. And if it were so we should be put to the ban of Europe. . . . You ought not for one moment to doubt that we shall carry out the treaty, and the whole treaty. If that were not just what we want," added the Prince, smiling, "*I undertake to go and make myself a prisoner at Paris.*

They talk of Belfort; it even appears that it is said among you that the 'military party' does not pardon me for having restored this strong place to you. That is a mistake.

"Do you insist on entering a little more quickly into the possession of Belfort? Is it the occupation of that place which vexes you? Leave us until the full payment another equivalent material pledge, Toul, Verdun, for example; then we will evacuate Belfort at the same time as the four Departments. . . ."

This indication was taken up by the Ambassador, who gave it precision. Bismarck did not withdraw it: "Well, well!" the Prince even said with good humour, "do you wish to substitute Toul or Verdun for Belfort, as the last point of occupation?'" The phrase was transmitted to M. Thiers, who seized upon it.

He telegraphed on the 12th of March: "I am ready to sign on the following conditions: Verdun substituted for Belfort; four weeks for the evacuation of the four Departments; ten days for the evacuation of Verdun: the substitution, to which we must cling, being once definitely accepted; last term of evacuation the 1st of September. These conditions being admitted, we can come to an understanding in two hours upon the documentary form."

Bismarck, not without hesitation and debate, accepted the solution proposed by himself. Upon the 12th of March, in his speech at the opening of the Reichstag, he made a very clear allusion to the understanding upon the anticipated evacuation. However on the 14th of March there was another attempt at Berlin to return to the question

of Belfort-Verdun. M. Thiers stood his ground. On the 14th of March M. de Gontaut-Biron telegraphed: "All is settled." A difficulty, which might become serious, had been again raised. Up to the last moment everything remained in suspense.

The Treaty of Evacuation signed

At last on the 15th of March, at 5.46, M. de Gontaut-Biron sent the telegram: "The treaty was signed at five o'clock."

Bismarck had not wished to leave to Count von Arnim the task of concluding so important a transaction. The protocols had been exchanged at Berlin and signed by the Chancellor and the French Ambassador, the Vicomte de Gontaut-Biron. The two principal clauses of the convention were devoted, one to the anticipation of the payments, the other to the parallel evacuation of the Departments occupied. France undertook to pay before the 10th of May, 1873, the five hundred millions, which ought to have been paid only by the 1st of March, 1874, and as for the last milliard falling due on the 1st of March, 1875, she was to pay it in four terms: June 5th, July 5th, August 5th, and September 5th, 1873.

On the other hand, Germany pledged herself to evacuate the four Departments still occupied (Ardennes, Vosges, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Meuse), with the exception of the fortress of Verdun and a radius of three kilométres, within a period of four weeks, to begin from the 5th of July, 1873.

This meant for the occupied territories and the populations themselves deliverance anticipated by nearly two years!

So then on the 17th of March, two days after the law was passed which modified his powers,

M. Thiers communicated the liberating agreement to the Assembly. This communication, made by M. de Rémusat, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was welcomed at first by long acclamations. M. Christophle, President of the Left Centre, proposed to vote immediately a motion in these terms: "*The National Assembly declares that the President of the Republic has deserved well of the country.*"

The Right remained for a moment silent: political passions profess ingratitude. M. de Saint-Marc Girardin, intervened with some awkwardness. He supported another Order of the day in which the Assembly "congratulated itself on having completed an essential part of its task." A somewhat confused debate took place. Feelings were in such confusion that a member of the Right cried out: "Three-quarters of an apotheosis, that is enough!" At last a motion which combined the two Orders of the day was unanimously voted. A deputation of the Bureau was charged to bring the declaration of the Assembly to the knowledge of M. Thiers. The entire Left joined in the deputation. The Right withheld. M. Thiers replied to the congratulations of the Bureau in this simple phrase: "The best reward for all the efforts that I have made, the one which touches me most, is the evidence that you bring me of the confidence of the country and of the Assembly by which it is represented."

On the following Thursday, the French Academy, on the proposal of M. Legouvé, declared that it was an honour to it to count in its bosom the men who had signed the Treaty of Liberation, and it deputed its Bureau to M. Thiers and M. de Rémusat to thank them. In the country a great number of deliberative bodies joined in these manifestations.

Among the innumerable congratulations received by M. Thiers we will only mention a single one: this perhaps was the one of all to which he was most sensitive; it came from Guizot. The former President of the Council of King Louis Philippe expressed himself in the following terms:—

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE,—

I cannot allow the happiest and most considerable transaction of your public life to pass without congratulating you upon it, and without congratulating myself along with you and our whole country.

It is a great piece of good fortune, and a great and rare honour to advance the day, on which France will re-enter into full possession of herself, of all her independence, and all her dignity in Europe. You have acted like a true and efficient patriot.

I wish that you may find recognition in the country on a level with your services. It is the only reward which is worthy of the service itself and of the man who has rendered that service.

I take a pleasure, my dear colleague, in expressing to you my very honest and very affectionate sentiments.

GUIZOT.

The day after the vote in the Assembly, M. Jules Simon laughingly said to the President of the Republic at the Council of Ministers: "There! your work is done; you will have to say your *Nunc dimittis*."

Looking at his friend with a pensive air, M. Thiers replied:

"But they have nobody!"

"They have Marshal MacMahon," replied M. Jules Simon.

"Oh, as for him," said M. Thiers sharply, "I answer for that, he will never accept." [1]

[1] J. Simon, *Gouvernement de M. Thiers*, t. ii. p. 368.

CHAPTER X

THE TWENTY-FOURTH OF MAY.

Party Struggles—The War Contracts; Attacks on M. Challemel-Lacour—The Municipal Government of Lyons—Petition of Prince Napoleon on the Subject of his Expulsion; Compact between the three Monarchical Parties—Resignation of M. Grévy; M. Buffet President of the National Assembly—The Elections of April 27, 1873; M. Barodet elected in Paris—Fresh Elections, May 11—Resignation of MM. Jules Simon and de Goulard—Meetings for the Choice of a Candidate for the Presidency; an Agreement upon the Name of Marshal MacMahon—M. Thiers remoulds his Ministry—Interpellation of the Right—M. Thiers brings forward Bills relative to the Organization of the Public Powers—Sitting of May 23; Speeches of de Broglie and Dufaure—Sittings of May 24; Speech of M. Thiers; Declaration of M. Casimir-Périer; the Target Group—M. Thiers, put in a Minority, resigns—Marshal MacMahon elected President of the Republic—Conclusion.

I

The Debate on the War Contracts and M. Challemel-Lacour

WHILE the Government had so much trouble to hold the balance between the parties, they for their part having reached the height of exasperation, flung themselves upon one another with fury. The shabby edifices constructed by the Committee of Thirty, the fragile barriers raised by the foresight of M. Thiers, nothing could resist the agitation which was soon going to shake the National Assembly and universal suffrage itself.

The Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier had declared in a menacing tone in his recent reply to M. Gambetta on the subject of the petitions, that the Committee on Contracts had not yet said its last word. This, in fact, became an engine of war.

In the last days of January an attack had been aimed at a deputy of some distinction on the Left, a friend of M. Gambetta, one of the principal collaborators in the *République Française*, M. Challemel-Lacour, a former prefect of the Rhône ; the attack was in connexion with the Lyons contracts. M. Challemel-Lacour was one of the highest physiognomies of the Republican party. A former pupil of the higher École Normale, proscribed on the 2nd of December (1851), a writer of great talent, an eager and sarcastic intellect, an orator already in repute, whose full amplitude was, however, not yet known, he was one of those who keep mediocrities in a respectful attitude. But little made for action, he had, however, developed great energy as a prefect under the National Defence at Lyons ; he had made numerous enemies. Marseilles had made him a member of the National Assembly in the bye-elections. He had to reply to accusations under two heads ; bad financial management, and a weakness in respect to the proceedings of the International. The direct attack, prepared a long while in advance, was intended to have a powerful action upon public opinion. The Comte de Paris was present at the sitting of the 30th of January in which the matter was discussed.

They had thought that they had to do with a mere man. They unchained eloquence. M. Challemel-Lacour, a man of strong build, high colour,

with blue eyes, his beard already white, cold and haughty, entered the tribune. He remained there for three hours, speaking slowly, weighing his words, sometimes hurling an unexpected shaft, holding out against his opponents, who were irritated by his coolness, and attacked him furiously.

He refuted the accusations of the Committee by entering into a detailed account of the facts, but also by tracing an animated picture of the work of the National Defence in the East. He then raised his voice and paid a magnificent homage to France, "struggling under the foot of the stranger." On the other hand, he brought an indictment against the Committee on Contracts, which he accused "of setting to work to supply France with pretexts for despising herself." He epitomized in a passage loftily moderate, and animated with a philosophic irony the whole work of the Committee: "You do not bring forward one act of malversation, you do not bring forward one deed of dilapidation. These are wanting in your report. But of some things there is an abundance, insinuations, railings, harsh words, terms which the public misuses; these you have not spared. You have given the rein to your passions! You said to yourselves: Who will demand a reckoning of us for a little show of temper against political opponents? There are minds which believe that political passion is an excuse for anything; that it is permitted to stain the honour of an adversary in order to fight him, that one may create belief in the existence of deeds which soil honour, and do not exist! I say that such men deceive themselves. Political passions themselves have their bounds; these bounds are justice and truth! And there is

something still more serious than the maltreatment of an adversary, than the perversion of truth, than an outrage on justice; it is the sad and fatal example thereby given to a nation which it is proposed to instruct and moralize!"

The Right listened in silence to these fine words, an honour to French thought and to the French language. But its admiration did not disarm its wrath. Political frenzy does not allow itself to think. It wraps itself in its infatuation like the Roman in the fold of the toga which blinds him. This art, these words, are the patrimony of the nation. To-morrow you will honour them yourselves. . . .

No! Passion had its way.

M. Challemel-Lacour, not being a dishonest man, they strained their efforts to make him a sanguinary prefect. Hardly had he stepped down from the tribune when M. de Carayon-Latour took his place. He affirmed that he saw on the desk of General de Bressoles a report from the Mayor of Vénissieux (Rhône) which incriminated the battalion of mobiles of the Gironde at the time when he, M. de Carayon-Latour, had been their leader. On the margin of this report there was written, he said, in the hand of the former prefect of the Rhône, these words: "Have all those fellows shot."

M. Challemel-Lacour could only with great difficulty obtain silence to make his explanation. He demanded the production of the document. Fresh confusion, which the President succeeded in quelling only by suspending the sitting.

Twice over the incident returned before the Assembly with increasing violence. M. Challemel-

Lacour always protested that his memory did not recall to him anything of the kind, and demanded the production of the document, repeating with notorious persistence one phrase, always the same: "I demand the document! I must have the document!" It could not be found.

The debate remained without a solution, in the same way that the incident—supposing that it had ever happened—had remained without effect in reality.

The Committee had been obliged to modify its conclusions and confined itself to demanding that its report should be referred to the Ministers of War, Finance and Justice, in order that a settlement might be made as to a claim of eight millions formulated by the town of Lyons. To this motion was added a reprimand of the revolutionary proceedings of the municipality of Lyons, which had substituted the red flag for the national colours. Now M. Challemel-Lacour had struggled against the municipality at the risk of his life. This, however, was the motion which was adopted by 559 votes to 42. A most violent attack directed against the Government of National Defence, one in which it appeared at first that there was a question of tyrannical deeds, and of dishonesty, had ended in a unanimous vote against the red flag.

However, the whole of the debate upon the Lyons question was not yet cleared up. It was soon to open again on the occasion of the municipal organization of that great town. The Assembly had cried a truce to its passions to vote the law of liberation. The debate on the municipal organization of Lyons was fixed for the 31st of March. On the day before, the majority reckoned itself up, so to

Petition of Prince Napoleon

say, and tried its strength in discussing the petition of Prince Napoleon, protesting against the arrest of which he had been the object on the preceding 12th of October. Times had certainly changed; for it is now Legitimists like MM. Fresneau and Depeyre who indict the arbitrary proceedings of the Government. The new chief of the Right, M. de Broglie, made a point of confirming the agreement which united the three Monarchist parties.

M. Dufaure recalled the fall of the Empire declared at Bordeaux; he gave most conclusive proofs of the Bonapartist conspiracy. The Government was obliged to content itself, on the subject of an action emanating from the personal authority of the President, with the Order of the day pure and simple, and even that was only voted by 334 to 298.

On the following day the debate began on the subject of the municipal organization of Lyons.

After Paris Lyons was the town most agitated by the results of the revolution of the Fourth of September. Catholics and Freethinkers contended there with that ardour of conviction which characterizes the sentiments of this noble and grave city. Inferior in numbers the Catholic party declared that it suffered from an intolerable oppression. The Right of the Assembly considered it a duty to come to its aid.

In the sitting of February 3, 1873, Baron Chaurand, an ardent Catholic, had brought forward a measure suppressing the central Town Hall of Lyons, and submitting the town to a constitution similar to that of Paris.

The discussion was keen. M. de Goulard, Minister of Home Affairs, had put himself into a somewhat

delicate position by giving his adhesion to the proposal of Baron Chaurand, while M. Thiers was favourable to an understanding with the Right. The Vicomte de Meaux was the reporter of the Bill which was to be adopted on the 4th of April by 471 votes to 173.

But men's minds were in such an irritable condition, that an incident which occurred in the course of the discussion suddenly assumed unforeseen proportions.

In the sitting of the 1st of April one of the most respected members of the Left, M. Le Royer, a former *procureur général* at Lyons, "a cold and severe man," says M. Thiers, was at the tribune; he replied to the speech of the reporter, the Vicomte de Meaux. The latter had embarrassed him by making certain quotations tending to put the former public prosecutor, now a deputy on the Left, in contradiction with himself. M. Le Royer, while smartly debating the allegations of the Vicomte de Meaux, uttered the following sentence: "I now come to the examination of what the Reporter has added to this baggage of the report. . . ."

A deputy of the Right then interrupted, crying: "That is not Parliamentary; the word *baggage* is not worthy of the Assembly." Immediately a storm rose. The Right stood up. "It is an impertinence," shouted M. de Grammont.

In vain M. Le Royer explained that no insulting intention existed in his thoughts. He called to witness the members even of the Committee who were of opinion that the word "baggage" was employed in a perfectly admissible sense. That was no good. M. de Grammont repeated that the word "baggage" was an impertinence. Upon

which M. Le Royer declared that he would leave the tribune unless M. de Grammont was called to order.

M. Grévy was presiding. At this point must be introduced the narrative of M. de Meaux: "For a moment President Grévy had not been attending; a beautiful foreign lady with whom he was on a footing of recognized and, for that matter, quite innocent flirtation, was present at the sitting; it was the 1st of April; I do not know why, but she was annoyed with him on that particular day and wanted to play him a trick. She had in her pocket the photograph of an old English housekeeper; she wrapped it up in a series of scented papers, and had the note carried with an address in the most seductive handwriting to the President, who was then in the chair. He had already discovered the fair one in the balcony in which she was hiding; he unfolded the pretty parcel, thinking he should find there a charming face and charming message. The sudden sight of the sullen face excited his anger, and knowing well where the blow came from, he looked at the lady, red with annoyance. That was the moment when the dispute between the Marquis de Grammont and M. Le Royer raised a tumult. The President, absorbed in his mistake, and hardly knowing what was going on, called the Marquis de Grammont to order."

The latter addressed ironical apologies to M. Le Royer, and turned his fury against President Grévy. The entire Right supported the angry deputy. Soon the skilled hands understood that the opportunity was a propitious one for overturning the last obstacle which was opposed to the realization of their plans.

M. Grévy was susceptible. Perhaps even at that time he had, on his side, other plans. In the middle

of a lull, he indicated that he would not remain in the Chair.

Resignation of M. Grévy

The following day, the 2nd of April, he addressed his resignation to the Assembly. He was immediately re-elected, but persisted in his resignation.[1]

M. Buffet, President of the Assembly

On the 4th a ballot took place for the choice of his successor. M. Martel had been put forward by the Left in opposition to M. Buffet of the Right Centre. It was known that the candidature of M. Martel was agreeable to M. Thiers. Now, M. Buffet was elected by 304 votes against 285 given to his Republican rival. M. Buffet obtained only six votes more than the absolute majority, and only 19 more than his opponent. Such was the exact position of parties in the Assembly.

The latter had henceforth a fighting President. The Convention for the evacuation was signed; the reconciliation between the Orleanists and

[1] M. Grévy had been elected President of the National Assembly eight times since February the 16th, 1871. At each ballot the number of votes by which he was elected decreased. Nothing gives a clearer idea of the progress of the coalition which was to end on the 24th of May than the result of the successive ballots for the election of the President. Here is the list:—

	VOTES.
Feb. 16, 1871	519
May 16, 1871	506
August 16, 1871	461
Dec. 5, 1871	511
March 5, 1872	494
June 5, 1872	459
Nov. 12, 1872	462
Feb. 16, 1873	429

At this last ballot ninety-eight members of the Right Centre openly sent in blank papers. M. Grévy could not be mistaken as to the intentions of the majority.

Legitimists had supervened, the agreement with the Bonapartists was concluded; nothing any longer stood in the way of the realization of the plans of the Monarchists for the downfall of M. Thiers. "It was the first time," said the Viscount de Meaux, "that the majority of the Assembly agreed on a choice destined to thwart M. Thiers; this agreement presaged a fall for him of which M. Buffet became the instrument. Without M. Buffet the attack which was to bring M. Thiers down would not have had a chance of coming to anything; and this was doubtless the point on which the Duc de Broglie had calculated in driving on this election, not that he was from that time irrevocably determined on the attack; but he began to force and prepare for it."

M. Buffet

M. Buffet, deputy of the Vosges, was at that time in the prime of life. He was a man of tall stature with black whiskers, his face and bearing devoid of grace, his features harsh. An honourable man, industrious, particular, captious, tenacious, he was a declared Parliament man; he had been a Minister under the Prince-president, and had sent in his resignation; he had been a Minister in the Ollivier Cabinet and had resigned; he had had up to that time a troubled political life and without brilliancy. According to the papers found in the Tuileries, M. Rouher judged of him in these terms: "M. Buffet is a doctrinaire mind and yet always undecided, who will never give himself completely, who will present himself in a ministerial combination with conditions and a programme on everything and everybody." He had been reckoned among the political friends of M. Thiers. The latter had offered him the portfolio of Finance in his first

Cabinet after the war; he had not accepted it, and had from that time separated himself from the President. He sulked, but it was not easy to guess the reason. First a Republican, then a Bonapartist, he then became, with the same indisputable good faith, always a partisan of Parliamentary Monarchy.

M. Buffet took his seat in the chair on the 5th of April. After having assured the Assembly of his impartiality, he traced in the following terms the programme of the labours of the future.

"We have," he said, "completed with the skilful and patriotic assistance of the illustrious President of the Republic the first part of our task. The second is no less important, no less difficult. It remains to us to give our country, tried by such cruel catastrophes, all the guarantees for security and for a future that it shall be possible for us to procure for her. We will not fail in this duty."

The hour of the vacation was about to strike. Before separating, the Assembly voted, after a long and confused debate, the law granting an indemnity of 240 millions, under the head of compensation, for the detriment caused to the populace by the war. The sum was divided into equal shares between Paris and the Departments. The measure was considered as marking the ill-feeling of the Assembly towards the Capital.

At last, after a session of five months, the Assembly adjourned on the 7th of April, 1873, to the following 19th of May.

II

The Parliamentary Vacation

The Lyons incident was not closed; it was to have its sequel in the presence of universal suffrage. The Republican

party was dissatisfied with M. Thiers. The secret conclaves of the Committee of Thirty and the understanding between the latter and the President had filled it with alarm; it felt that the Republic was at the mercy of a smart move on the part of the majority. It was asked whether M. Thiers was a sufficiently vigilant guardian of a political system towards which he inclined in a too clever feat of balancing. The aggressive vigour of M. Dufaure displeased the Republican deputies. The violences of the last sittings had excited their spirit. It was decided to "give M. Thiers a lesson."

Candidature of M. de Rémusat

Precisely during the vacation bye-elections were to be held, and notably in Paris, to replace M. Sauvage, deceased. The ballot was to take place on the 27th of April.

On the 22nd of March the mayors of Paris, who had come to Versailles to congratulate M. Thiers on the conclusion of the treaty with Germany, had discoursed with him on the neglect of the approaching elections. In the course of the interview the President had attributed a large share in the services bestowed on the country to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. de Rémusat. M. de Rémusat was a former Royalist, a man of distinguished mind, who had come over to the Republic along with M. Thiers. The idea of his candidature in Paris was born of this conversation.

M. Thiers thought that Paris would vote as in the previous year, and that on the morrow of the decree consecrating the liberation of the territory it would make a point of giving the President a mark of confidence. Accordingly he showed himself favourable to the candidature of M. de Rémusat. M. de Rémusat himself hesitated. The Council

of Ministers was divided. M. Thiers held his ground. Perhaps, as he said with some shrewdness to the Duc de Broglie, he had conceived the idea of "causing the national satisfaction to be consecrated by a kind of plébiscite." [1]

He reckoned without the ill-temper of the Republicans. It was currently said that the Rémusat candidature was a Monarchist intrigue, and that the policy of M. Thiers was inevitably leading to an Orleanist restoration by way of the Presidency of the Duc d'Aumale.

As the result of some subterraneous working, in which an agitator of equivocal reputation, M. Portalis, was concerned, then chief editor of the *Corsaire*, pressure was produced upon the chiefs of the Republican party, and most of them rallied, not without hesitation, to the candidature of M. Barodet, a former schoolmaster and mayor of Lyons. In connexion with recent events in Parliament they aspired to unite in one startling manifestation the democracy of Paris and the democracy of Lyons. M. Barodet himself admitted in his profession of faith that he was a "modest" servant of the Republic.

Split in the Republican Party

Meanwhile the men of the party who were most in view, Edmond Adam, Paul Bert, Louis Blanc, Challemel-Lacour, Gambetta, Rouvier, addressed a proclamation to the electors of Paris, which produced a great effect. They denounced the "official" character of the candidature of M. de Rémusat: they declared that the "cause of the Republic, of the democracy, of Republican order, of social peace was intimately

[1] Duc de Broglie, *La Mission de M. de Gontaut-Biron à Berlin*, p. 95.

bound up with the success of the candidature of M. Barodet."

The moderates of the party, MM. Grévy, Littré, Langlois, Cernuschi, understanding the whole gravity of the situation, and the imminent peril which threatened M. Thiers and the Republic, had rallied to the candidature of M. de Rémusat. The Left, properly so-called, and the Left Centre had formed under the presidency of M. Hippolyte Carnot, a committee to support the Minister of Foreign Affairs. M. Jules Grévy notably had authorized the publication of the following declaration :

Letter of M. Jules Grévy

From the point of view of the strengthening of the Republic, he said, the candidature of M. Barodet is a great mistake.

In the difficult position made for it by the parties in the Assembly the Government needs that force should be given to it against the enemies of the Republic, and not an unseasonable warning which would only be a check to it, and a source of weakness full of danger.

It is furthermore an act of sovereign impolicy when the country, disengaging itself from its long preoccupations, comes at length to the form of government proper to its social condition, to the only one which can close the era of its revolutions, and restore to it, along with order, peace and liberty, its prosperity and its greatness, to furnish pretexts to those who seek to frighten it in order to make it draw back once again.

At this moment, M. Gambetta, who, it appears, had at first hesitated, thought that he ought to declare himself. On the 22nd of April, in a private meeting held at Belleville, he spoke in favour of the candidature of M. Barodet, and it may be said that his action determined the victory.

M. Thiers had a moment of hesitation. He understood the gravity of a decision which, whatever its issue, was about to separate the advanced Left from

himself. But as soon as this hesitation was known, the Conservatives intervened: "Declare yourself," they cried; "you are about to deliver Paris to M. Gambetta. . . . Support us, we will give you the most active assistance." Meanwhile a candidature from the Right was prepared, that of Colonel Stoffel.

M. Thiers, taken between two fires, let the Rémusat candidature go on. It was ardently defended by the moderate fraction of the Left, which "showed," says M. Thiers, "as much resolution as moderation." But the Right chilled in proportion. The two parties were seeking to get at one another, and the Government, placed between them, suffered all the blows.

The Right fought with M. Thiers when he was finishing the liberation of the territory. The advanced party fought him at the moment when he had just founded the Republic by his skilled audacity in the battle of the Thirty.

Everybody was carried away by the heat of battle. Committees multiplied; central committees, ward committees. The campaign of placards and proclamations was inaugurated on this occasion. Paris was multicoloured for a fortnight. It is said that two hundred thousand posters were put up during the period of the election.

"On the last days, the walls, the closed shops, the public buildings were not sufficient. The parapets of the bridges were placarded, the gas standards, the trees, the public accommodations."[1]

On the 27th of April, under a pouring rain, the electors repaired in crowds to the voting halls.

[1] O. Monprofit, *Les Murs de Paris*, Avril, 1873.

M. Barodet was elected by 180,045 against 135,028 votes given to M. de Rémusat. Colonel Stoffel, brought forward by the allied Bonapartists and Legitimists, collected 26,644 votes. Out of 457,049 registered electors only 111,290 abstained from voting.

Paris welcomed the result of the ballot by cries of "Vive la République."

The day after the election the consequences of the mistake that had just been committed were understood in the Republican party. Intending to force the hand of M. Thiers, they had given arms to the Right.

The Right denounced the triumph of anarchy, and the powerlessness of the Government. M. Barodet himself thought it his duty immediately to give his support to that power to which so rough a blow had just been dealt by his election; he expressed himself as follows in the thanks which he addressed to the electors: "My candidature was not a fighting candidature. Paris only supported it and ensured its triumph because she understood that it was less a question of contending with the Government than of enlightening it."

In the Departments the elections were all Republican except one, that of the Morbihan which elected M. du Bordan, a clerical, beating only by a few votes M. Beauvais, mayor of Lorient, a moderate Republican. Those elected were: MM. Alphonse Picard (Marne), Edouard Lockroy (Bouches-du-Rhône), Dupony (Gironde), Latrade (Corèze), Gagneur (Jura).

On the 11th of May other elections took place for the telling of votes: in the Rhône, in the Department of Loir-et-Cher, in the Charente-Inférieure,

in the Nièvre, in the Haute-Vienne. Lyons, which had two deputies to elect, returned the politeness of Paris by adding a municipal councillor of Paris, M. Ranc, to the local candidate, M. Guyot. Out of six elections, five were Republican. The Radicals were elected against the Conservative Republicans in the Departments of the Haute-Vienne and the Loir-et-Cher. In the Charente-Inférieure, M. Boffinton, a Bonapartist, passed only with difficulty against Dr. Rigaud, a Republican.

The Right, feeling its numerical strength weakening day by day, decided to finish with M. Thiers, who was visibly outflanked. An opportunity presented itself of opening a preliminary skirmish during the parliamentary vacation. It was seized.

Offensive Dispositions of the Right

In a speech which he had made before the general Assembly of learned societies, the Minister of Public Instruction, M. Jules Simon, had attributed to M. Thiers the whole merit of the liberation of the territory, "to him alone."

M. Buffet, putting into practice the sentence in his inaugural speech, in which he announced that he would cause the Assembly to be respected, declared immediately that if the words of M. Jules Simon were not disavowed on high authority, he would immediately summon the deputies. The Permanent Committee began to move. M. de Goulard, Minister of Home Affairs, a member of the Right, publicly disavowed his colleague. A violent scene occurred the next day in the very bosom of the Council of Ministers. On the 16th of May MM. Jules Simon and de Goulard sent in their resignations.

On the 15th of May the Permanent Committee

had contemplated the necessity of an interpellation on the general policy of the Government. The idea took shape. A plan of compaign was elaborated. Victory was considered certain. Negotiations were immediately broached to designate in advance a successor to M. Thiers.

The Candidates for the Presidency

The Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier and the Duc Decazes repaired to the Duc d'Aumale and offered him the Presidency of the Republic.

"You wish it," said he, "you appeal to my patriotism; you declare to me that I can be useful to my country in that post; good, I accept!"[1]

But the Legitimists, in obedience to orders from Frohsdorff, would perhaps refuse to follow their Orleanist colleagues? Would the name of the Duc d'Aumale be once again put on one side by the Comte de Chambord?

What was to be done?

Up to this time the Duc de Broglie had held himself in reserve. At last he spoke; he recommended a general; a safe general, an uncompromised general, accepted in advance by the army, and unable to give umbrage to any party. He was questioned. Who? Changarnier? His eighty years were against him. All the names were passed in review. There was one which would rally all the votes, that of MacMahon. The Marshal was not enrolled in any party. Legitimist in family, he had made his career under the two last Monarchies; he had never shown himself a courtier. His position in the army, his recent victory over the Commune,

[1] E. Daudet, *Le Duc d'Aumale*, p. 265; Cf. M. Thiers, *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 406.

his reputation for loyalty, made him an excellent candidate for the succession to M. Thiers.

But the Marshal was in very close relations with the latter. It was M. Thiers, who, drawing him from an equivocal situation after Sedan, had entrusted him with the chief command of the army of Versailles.

Many times he had testified to his gratitude to the President, and had given him pledges of his fidelity. It was decided to sound the Marshal; the public interest was depicted to him, the appeal to his conscience was made, his duty was spoken of, his safety. The Duchess of Magenta was present at the sittings of the Assembly during the last days of the Session. It was affirmed that Catholic influences were brought to bear on her. However that may be, the Marshal replied to the first solicitations that he would not consent to take the place of M. Thiers. They returned to the charge. It was put before him that France was in danger, that he could not fail her on an occasion when the present and the future were at stake. His refusal seemed to be less firm. They insisted. He ended by declaring that he had no ambition for power, but that he would not desert France if M. Thiers retired.[1]

It appears further that if Marshal MacMahon had definitively refused, the help of Marshal Baraguay-d'Hilliers had been secured.

Meeting of the Rights

On Sunday, the 18th of May, a meeting of the delegates of the different groups of the majority took place at the house of the Duc de Broglie. The object of the meeting was to draw up a plan of battle and to determine the part of each.

[1] E. Daudet, *Le Duc d'Aumale*, p. 265.

At the opening of the meeting the candidature of the Duc d'Aumale was proposed. It was immediately objected to by M. Lucien Brun. The representative of the Extreme Right reminded the meeting that the Comte de Chambord had formally declared that he did not authorize a Prince of the House of France to accept the Presidency of the Republic. The Legitimist Right would surely not infringe upon the royal will. Furthermore, M. Lucien Brun drew a very gloomy picture of the inconveniences and dangers which the nomination of the Duc d'Aumale would occasion both at home and abroad.

The Duc d'Audiffret-Pasquier supported the candidature of the Prince with much vivacity, and ended by declaring that, the pretensions of the extreme Right were becoming intolerable, and that he would not submit to them any longer.

A disagreement was felt to be arising which might compromise everything. The Duc de Broglie intervened. Designated in advance to take the word at the tribune, he could not, he said, accept the responsibility of opening the debate unless the mutual understanding was complete. Since the name of the Duc d'Aumale raised such opposition he proposed the candidature of Marshal MacMahon; M. Lambert de Sainte-Croix proposed to vote at the first round for one or the other of those two candidates, and to rally, at the second round to the one who should have obtained most votes.

M. de Broglie renewed his declaration. No uncertainty ought to exist as to the complete union of the party: it was necessary to go all united to the very end. If not, he, the Duc de Broglie, would hold aloof.

This authoritative vote won the day. The candidature of the Duc d'Aumale was set on one side decisively. M. Rouher, visibly in agreement with the Duc de Broglie, had the doctrine of "dynastic squaring up" adopted, which ended in the candidature of Marshal MacMahon. This name on being put to the vote was hailed with unanimity.[1]

Before pledging itself, the Bonapartist party had taken its securities.

Dispositions of M. Thiers

The coalition was formed and ready for any event. M. Thiers, on his side, also had taken up his positions for fighting. On the 19th of May the *Journal Officiel* published the following note at the head of the official column:—

The President of the Republic, recognizing the necessity of modifying his administration, has demanded the resignations of all the ministers. They have hastened to transmit them to him.

MM. Dufaure, de Rémusat, Léon Say, Teisserenc de Bort, General Cissey and Vice-Admiral Pothuau keep their portfolios.

M. Casimir-Périer is appointed Minister of Home Affairs; M. de Fourtou, Minister of Public Worship; M. Bérenger, Minister of Public Works, and M. Waddington, Minister of Public Instruction.

The Council of Ministers after mature deliberation decided that the administration of public worship, and the administration of public instruction should be separated henceforth, as indeed the wish for this change had been so often expressed in our Assemblies.

In consequence of these modifications the Ministry is composed as follows:—

MM. Casimir-Périer, Home Affairs; de Rémusat, Foreign Affairs; Dufaure, Justice; Léon Say, Finance; de Fourtou, Worship; Waddington, Public Instruction; Bérenger, Public Works; Teisserenc de Bort, Commerce; General de Cissey, War; Pothuau, Marine.

[1] E. Daudet, *Le Duc d'Aumale*, p. 267.

The evolution was evident. M. Thiers was trying, timidly perhaps, to take afresh his point of support on the Left.

The three new Ministers were very recent Republicans, it is true, but still Republicans. All three of them had however voted for the law on the Municipality of Lyons, and one of them, M. Bérenger, had even made during the debate a very energetic speech ending with the suppression of the central Town Hall.

However that may be, M. Thiers presented himself before the National Assembly on its return, as the majority had demanded of him in June, 1872, with a homogeneous cabinet. M. de Fourtou was the only member of the Right, who, to the great astonishment of his friends, had kept his portfolio.

All the measures were taken on each side. The decisive battle could not be avoided much longer.

III

The Respective Positions

The conditions under which the fight began must be defined. As the Duc de Broglie, who himself led the fray, very justly remarks, there existed originally between the Assembly and M. Thiers an agreement which deferred discussions on the constitution till the moment when the national territory was liberated. The convention was signed. The majority could then consider itself freed from its engagement and resume its liberty of action.

While the compact lasted, had it been respected on both sides? That would have been to ask too much of the parties. During those long months, full of agitation, of unforeseen incidents, and of

pressing necessities, it was impossible that everybody should have observed the word of command, mouth shut and arms grounded. Thus for a long time men had come to mutual grievances and reproaches.

The Monarchists had conducted the campaign of the fusion in open daylight. They had not succeeded; but the greater their disappointment, the keener their dissatisfaction with M. Thiers. He, and he alone, it was affirmed, could have forced the hand of the Comte de Chambord; no account was taken of his personal sentiments with regard to the Legitimist Pretender, the son of the Duchesse de Berry. The Orleanists did not forgive him for having remained Philippist; a grudge was felt against him for having, according to the wishes of the Duke and Duchess of Orleans, remained faithful to the Revolution, and for not having contributed to the success of an enterprise which was not his own, and from which, they said, he had dissociated himself too skilfully.

Nor had he either remained faithful to the Bordeaux Compact; he had taken pledges favourable to the Republic at an early hour, and from that time he used to say with an ironical honesty to the Republican Right: "You are free; as for me, I am not so." When he was hard pressed, he used to add: "You are the masters. Create the Monarchy."

Two years had already passed away; two years of a provisional arrangement. A long delay in the life of Assemblies, in the life of men, and even in the life of peoples. The ageing generations, which had seen so many Governments succeed one another, needed to know how they were to arrange them-

selves to finish, and the young in what direction they were to plant themselves to succeed. It is impossible to say to the passing life: Wait.

Return on the Message of Nov. 13

M. Thiers had surprised everybody by the Message of the 13th of November. He had judged the hour to be opportune; after so many undisputed services, he had believed himself capable of carrying a vote from the Assembly; perhaps he had only obeyed that need of action which was innate in him. As often happens to old men, there was feverishness in his green old age; he was impatient of repose.

As a matter of fact, he had not deceived himself; in calling on the Assembly to appoint the Committee which had received the mandate to prepare the constitutional solution, he had marked a decisive moment; he had surprised, in the resistance of the Right, the joint in the harness through which the Republic would one day slip. By a kind of instinct which preserved a consciousness of the road which he had himself travelled, he had discerned the very narrow path which the future was following.

His piercing judgment divined that the Assembly —that Assembly so depreciated by the Republicans —was pregnant with a Republican constitution. The evolution would be slow, and perhaps painful. But was he not there himself to watch over the gestation and aid in the delivery? The old man accepted with a good grace, if not the part of father, at least that of mid-wife and god-father.

But the Republican party did not admit this distribution of parts, in which it detected some egotism. There was no particular affection in the ranks of this party for the eternal formula of M. Thiers: the Conser-

vative Republic, the Republic without Republicans. This baptism and substitution, before the birth, promised only meagre satisfactions.

The repeated electoral campaigns pledged the men of the Republican party to promises of a more and more pressing character with reference to the suffrage, and more and more clamorous. Difficulties gave a stimulus to convictions and passions, and also to appetite. *To-morrow*, they were always saying; but to-morrow belongs to nobody. Politicians are in a hurry; they need immediate realizations.

In the provinces the parties already were divided according to local rivalries, parochial antagonisms, or rather following the law of the great and eternal schism between the spirit of defence and the spirit of enterprise. They were very ardent, very exclusive. The narrower the field, the keener the passions. Under the penalty of losing the support of the masses of the electorate it had been necessary to reckon with them. The advent of new social strata had been proclaimed; it was necessary to make preparations for satisfying them. The Barodet election had brought together all mistrusts and all hopes.

This vigorous intervention of universal suffrage had ruined all the combinations of M. Thiers. It went beyond its aim; for it assumed the settlement of the question *Republic or Monarchy* which was still in suspense: it might delay everything and even compromise everything; in any case it put a powerful weapon in the hands of the adversaries of the President.

Skilful Tactics of the Duc de Broglie

They seized upon it. With singular skill their leader, the Duc de Broglie, saw at one glance the advantages that he could win from this false step. The

Monarchists had a supreme interest in delaying any definitive solution ; they were not ready. But they had every reason for apprehension that the provisional arrangement under the guidance of M. Thiers would continue to serve the Republic. It was necessary to stop, or better still, to set on one side that active and eager old man, who never lost sight of the real question, and who, since he had imposed upon himself as a task that of organizing the Republic with strength and wisdom, was only the more dangerous.

An opportunity offered itself for throwing the dogs off the scent.

During the period of barely two years since the Commune had been suppressed, the country, at least the Conservative country, had not forgotten the gravity of the danger which it had run. The hour had come for reviving its terrors, for calling up the perils of democracy, for taking up the defence of order which was believed to be threatened. It was no longer the cause of Monarchy which was at stake, it was the very existence of society.

The man who conceived this turning movement, the Duc de Broglie, was a cool, reflective mind, who delighted in stratagems planned far in advance ; silent in preparation, a man of action and an orator in the Parliamentary battle. He was seconded in the chair by the stubborn M. Buffet. He had taken all his measures. M. Thiers had not yet encountered such an opponent in the Assembly.

Perhaps the President himself did not understand the whole extent of the danger. He trusted too much in his own powers, in his prodigious resources, in his star : in single combat with such an adversary

he would have been in danger, but this adversary brought to the last encounter a well disciplined troop which had coldly sworn to a sentence of death.

The interest of the great days which are to follow lies in the fact that they bring on to the stage, through the voices of actors worthy of their parts, the wishes, the anxieties, the passions, the aspirations of the country. Those who lived through those hours know that France herself was panting with excitement and as it were suspended over the catastrophe of the drama which was being played at Versailles.

IV

On the day of the return of the Chamber, the 19th of May, all the deputies were present at the opening of the sitting. M. Buffet announced that a demand for an interpellation had been made by a large number of deputies. Its terms were as follows:

Interpellation of the Government's Policy

The undersigned, convinced that the gravity of the situation demands a Cabinet at the head of affairs whose stability reassures the country, demand to interpellate the Ministry on the modifications effected in its bosom, and on the necessity of making a resolutely conservative policy prevail in the Government.

"The names of the signatories? How many are they?" cried several voices on the Left.

"There are quite three hundred!" replied M. Baragnon.

The movers of the interpellation wished that it should be fixed for Friday, the 23rd; the Government consented.

Bill for the Organization of the Public Powers

M. Thiers had drawn up his counter attack: the Keeper of the Seals laid on the tribune, in conformity with clause 5 of the law of March 15, 1873, a Bill relative to the organization of the public powers and the creation of a second Chamber.

Already the two offensives are distinguishable. The Right attacks the procedures of the Government. The Government brings the Right face to face with its constituent duties. But the Right is master of the ground by the fact that a date was fixed for the order of the day. In presence of the threatening stroke, it evades the blow; it refuses to listen to the reading of the proposals of the Government.

The sitting of the 20th was devoted to the election of the Bureau.

M. Buffet was re-elected President by 359 to 289 votes given to M. Martel. In comparison with the 4th of April M. Buffet had gained 55 votes.

Two manifestations marked the election of the Vice-Presidents. The Right nominated M. de Goulard, who had just abandoned M. Thiers, dragging M. Jules Simon in his fall. On the other hand, M. de Larcy, another "victim" of M. Thiers, saw M. Martel preferred to him, who won by seven votes. This election gave some confidence to M. Thiers: the Assembly being divided into two nearly equal parts, he hoped that, thanks to his personal ascendency, the balance would incline slightly on his side.

Sitting of the 23rd of May

On the 23rd of May the sitting opened in the midst of a considerable gathering. The family of M. Thiers was in the President's gallery: the diplomatic body was in its full strength. Marshal MacMahon, in civilian dress,

and a group of officers in uniform occupied the gallery for general officers.

M. Thiers was seated on the Government bench. In fact, immediately after the passing of the minutes, M. Dufaure, Keeper of the Seals, read a deliberation of the Council of Ministers, held in conformity with clause 4 of the law of March 13, 1873, and declaring that as the interpellation concerned general policy, the President of the Republic would exercise his right to take part in the debate.

M. Thiers "would take part in the debate"; but he would not be able to utter a single word under penalty of putting himself in the position of violating the law. Such were the famous "chineseries" invented by the Committee of Thirty.

Speech of the Duc de Broglie

The Duc de Broglie asked leave to speak. Here is his theme:—

Under the present circumstances, there was a necessity to see at the head of affairs a Cabinet whose stability reassured the country. What then was the danger? In the possible triumph of the Radical party; that is what, in the opinion of the interpellators, constituted "the gravity of the situation."

The Radical party was not a political party, it was a party of social disorder. It had not repudiated the Commune, it thought that in the debate between the Assembly and the Commune of Paris, "if the Commune had exaggerated aspirations, it had also legitimate grievances, and that, if we had rights, we had exceeded in the application of them."

For the speaker the names of the newly elected deputies of the 27th of April and 11th of May, 1873, were sufficient to show that these dispositions

were those of the Radical party, M. Ranc, M. Lockroy, M. Guyot elected in the Rhône, these names had the same significance. Furthermore, had not M. Gambetta, speaking recently at Belleville, complained that "Paris had been abandoned to all the horrors of a wild reaction?"

"There are here three hundred and twenty deputies who have signed the interpellation, who are profoundly convinced that to meet the progress of Radical ideas the active, energetic action of the Government by legal methods is indispensable; who attribute to its oscillations, to its indecision, the greater part of the progress which these doctrines are making in the country, the other part being only to be imputed to the passions which they flatter in the heart of the populace.

"They think that the Government has not done all its duty when it has ensured material order, that *moral order* depends much upon it, that it can strengthen or weaken it by its attitude, by the doctrines which it professes with lofty conviction, and above all by the spirit which it breathes into its administration."

One might believe that the honourable interpellator had finished. Not so, he wished to deal a final blow. He contemplated the case in which the Government should issue victorious from the division:

"Beware," he then said; "for in this chance majority the whole staff of the Radical party itself would figure. It would figure in it as a victorious and dominant balance. The Cabinet and the rest of the majority would not be the allies but the pupils and wards of the Radical party.

"For a man to die for his cause, holding his flag in his hand and with one foot on the rampart which he defends, is a glorious death, from which a party rises again, and which ennobles the memory of public men.

"But for a man to die after having prepared the triumph of his adversaries before submitting to it; to die on having opened the gate of the citadel; to die in joining to the misfortune of being a victim, the absurdity of being a dupe, and the regret for having been a voluntary accomplice, that is a humiliation which carries away alike the reputations and lives of statesmen.

"I adjure the Ministry and its friends to call to mind the ministry of the Girondins, followed so closely by the 10th of August; I adjure them to remember that if contemporaries are often flattering, posterity is pitiless for Governments and Ministers, whose weakness hands over to the enemy the laws and the societies which they are charged to defend."

Not for one moment did the speaker stray from the line which he had traced for himself; not one single time did he betray himself. Monarchy, Republic, these two words had not been pronounced. The preferences and the sentiments of the leader of the majority had not appeared. The debate which was at the back of every mind was passed over in silence, and in a manner juggled away.

If by consummate skill and rare mastery it was possible to group the fragments of a tottering majority, to cover the provisional understanding between parties made to tear one another to pieces, to draw to a brilliant argument the anxieties, honest or feigned, wavering good intentions, and hesitating ability, the speech of the Duc de Broglie was bound to produce this effect. The whole strategy was directed against M. Thiers, and the Ministry was the object of the attack. The indictment against the man was confused with a philosophical and moral argument.

The Two Frances

With what art were men's minds thus diverted from the reality? The services of M. Thiers, the superhuman work which he had just supplied, the organization of public security, the fevered and useful life which he had led for two years, all that was at once admitted and omitted. The little man was treated contemptuously by a very haughty personage who neither allowed himself to be intimidated nor tempted. For the last time, perhaps, the two

Frances: the France of the past, the France with the great memories, aristocratic France, and modern France, middle-class France, laborious and self-made France, were face to face. And the first brought the indictment against the second: people who have wasted their fortunes have never demanded accounts more severely.

The Duc de Broglie

It was known how delicate was the position of the two adversaries. There existed between them an antagonism of situation, of tradition, of personality. Never had the Broglies been "Thiersists." Under Louis Philippe the father of Duke Albert was reckoned among the partisans of M. Guizot. This great Liberal family was not revolutionary, and, above all, it could not be asked to open its eyes to the new necessities for a Government with democratic tendencies. Born for the command, brought up in that art, worthy by their virtues and their talents to exercise it, such men do not understand a political system which affects—sometimes to its own loss—to be able to do completely without them.

Personally, between M. Thiers and the Duc de Broglie, the relations were strained; definite facts were quoted, anecdotes, those details which enter into the flesh of a sensitive man, and make lasting wounds. Of what are politics made up? Men adopt decisions for reasons which sometimes escape the intelligence and the conscience, but which touch the essence of the personality. Afterwards, pretexts are found.

Elected in the Eure the Duc de Broglie had only been able to arrive at Bordeaux at the moment when the Assembly was starting for Versailles. He met M. Thiers.

"I have arranged for you," said the latter to him. "I am sending you to the Conference of London. I take you with me to Versailles this evening, on the way I will give you your instructions."

The Duc de Broglie arrived rather late in the saloon carriage of the Head of the State with MM. Jules Favre and Ernest Picard. M. Thiers was not long in going to sleep. He did not wake up till they reached Poitiers. There, an allusion having been made to the Princes of Orleans, the President of the Republic lost his temper:

"Their conduct is unworthy," he cried. "They come to look for a crown in the misfortunes of their country."

M. de Broglie protested. M. Thiers insisted, and the quarrel was lively: it was not forgotten.[1]

The Duc de Broglie had resigned his post of Ambassador in London to come and take his place in the battle in the Assembly. M. Thiers had not been slow to perceive that the Right had a leader. Perhaps he allowed his displeasure to be seen. When he submitted to the Assembly the agreement relative to the payment of the indemnity he did not think fit to give sufficient recognition to the help which was afforded to him by the Duc de Broglie, reporter of the Committee.

Some time afterwards the same coldness for the services which the Duc de Broglie believed himself to have rendered in the laborious debates of the Committee of Thirty: "In agreement with one of the members of the Committee, I thought it my duty on the very evening of the vote to mix with the crowd of those who went to pay him their

[1] Ernest Daudet, *Le Duc d'Aumale*, p. 207. M. Daudet adds in a note that he had this story from the Duc de Broglie.

compliments. I really believe that the first moment he did not concern himself to recognize us, and he then accorded a welcome to our congratulations which did not encourage us to renew them. We could not prevent ourselves, my companion and myself, as we went down the staircase of the Residence, from looking at one another with a smile. It was clear that we were no longer wanted; I thought as much, but perhaps it would have been better to wait a few days before making us feel it."[1]

These opposite sentiments, these reminiscences, the mutual prejudice, the wish to win, the greatness of the debate, everything was there to animate this fight in which one alone of the combatants was free in his movements.

M. Thiers, embarrassed and irritated, was nailed to his seat by the law of the Thirty.

As for the Right, it had listened without interruption to the manifesto pronounced in its name. Its reflections, more numerous still than the words of the orator, represented to it the whole gravity of the act which was in preparation. But it was resolved. The sombre group remained silent. It was no longer a question of debating but of voting.

M. Dufaure's Reply

M. Dufaure, Keeper of the Seals, Vice-President of the Council, had received the mandate to reply to the Duc de Broglie. He acquitted himself of his task with his usual vigour. But one would say that he felt that the debate was passing over his head. His position, for that matter, was false, or at least embarrassed. In order to remain faithful to his

[1] Duc de Broglie, *La Mission de M. de Gontaut-Biron à Berlin*, p. 85.

previous declarations he repeated, after the Duc de Broglie, the indictment against the Radical party, whose votes, however, were discounted. However, he did not lose his habit of slashing attack, not being the man to escape the influence of an atmosphere of irritation. He flung back upon the Duc de Broglie the abuse which this latter had made of certain press polemics: "I am astonished that the honourable Duc de Broglie, who, at the very least from family memories, should preserve some consideration with reference to his colleagues, should attribute to the colleagues whom he has in the Cabinet opinions drawn from the newspapers, in which any day that he pleases he will find, equally easily, attacks upon ourselves."

Now this is a bit of clumsy hitting compared with the delicate fencing of the preceding speaker. But M. Dufaure recovers the advantages of common sense and robust logic, when he pounces upon a skilful bit of argumentation, and pierces it through and through to put the real question so ably dissembled:

"Well! I was struck, like the honourable Duc de Broglie himself, by the elections of the 27th of April and 11th of May; I thought that they gave us a strong lesson; I understood that to struggle henceforth against the danger that had been indicated a definitive Government was necessary; it is for this reason that we have brought forward the constitutional Bills.

"We have presented them to you with conviction; we were ready to declare to you that if you did not grant what we asked of you, the recognition of the Government of the Republic, we no longer felt ourselves in possession of the strength to be responsible for public order in our country."

But he was barely listened to. The Right wanted to finish the business. What was the use of so many words? The speech was hardly finished,

when it shouted impatiently: "Divide! divide! the closure!"

The President was on the point of consulting the Assembly, when M. Waddington, Minister of Public Instruction, delivered a sealed note to him. It was a message from the President of the Republic in these terms:

Versailles, May 23, 1873.

MR. PRESIDENT,—In conformity with the law of the 13th of March, 1873, which authorizes me to speak upon interpellations, when they touch upon the general policy of the State, in conformity with the declaration of the Ministers who recognize this character in the present interpellations, I beg you to inform the Assembly of my intention to intervene in the debate, thus using the right which the law confers upon me, and which reason alone would suffice to ensure to me, if the law did not exist.

(Signed) A. THIERS.

On the reading of this document great agitation first, then great disorder followed. The Assembly floundered in the complexities of the law of the 13th of March.

Some members demanded that the President should be heard at once. M. Thiers opened his mouth:

"I demand——" he said.

But immediately his voice was drowned in the shouting of the majority. They cry to him:

"The law! The law! You cannot speak!"

At last harmony was established. The debate was adjourned till the next day, May 24th. The majority wished to finish in a single day. It fixed nine o'clock for the sitting in which M. Thiers was to speak.

So then, on the 24th of May, at a quarter-past nine in the morning, M. Thiers was at the tribune. He was visibly moved. His complexion was pale,

his voice weak, but sharp; it pierced the silence. He delivered his last battle; he spoke to the Assembly, he aimed at the country.

The Speech of M. Thiers

First he unmasked the whole strategy of his opponents. Under the appearance of an attack on the Ministry he himself was the object of their wrath. He flung himself into the front rank with his breast bare: "If there is a culprit, I am he!" and he insisted: "The verdict which you are about to return will not be directed against the loyal ministers who surround me, but against myself. You know now, gentlemen, what will be the result of the decision which you are going to take. The occasion is a solemn one. You are going to decide the destinies of the country. You must permit me to speak to the parties, to individuals, to everybody with all the frankness which we owe one another."

Here then is this citizen, alone, without any other weapon, any other resource except his eloquence and his services, in front of the conspiracy of his determined adversaries:—

"I was called to power," he said, "in one of the gravest circumstances in our history, perhaps the gravest, for I do not know of a situation comparable to that of France in 1871; that of 1815, and, in the past, that of the time when the English occupied half our territory, were not perhaps so grave as that which our misfortunes created for us two years and a half ago. Under these circumstances, you know well, I did not seek for power, I did not desire it: I was terrified at it."

He lingered a little over these facts so recent and already forgotten: and with self-complacency? No. He suddenly drew from them the whole force of the direct argument which he opposed to his formidable adversary:—

"Gentlemen, think of the position of the country. When

you placed its affairs in our hands, it was invaded in the north by the foreign enemy, in the south by democracy, which, under the impulse given by the public misfortunes, had become demagogy. Government existed nowhere; finances there were none, army there was none. Was that the greatest of our evils? I venture to say, no; the greatest was the division, the immense division which is unexampled in history; and it was with a divided country, with mutually antipathetic parties—permit me to say so—that we had to disentangle from this situation a single will, a Government which should permit us to be sufficient to meet the misfortunes and necessities of the time.

"Well! Gentlemen, you will look at us, and you will judge us, it is your right; but your duty is to look at yourselves, and to see in what a state of deep and unexampled division you still find yourselves."

And then he attacks the apparent block raised by his opponents; he shatters it. He shows at once the contradictions of the parties and their impotence. Here is his whole argument, the reason for his conduct, his whole justification:—

"First, there is one great division, a very great division, which by itself alone would be sufficient to disturb a country some wish for Monarchy, others wish for a Republic.

"We are told that the question is one of conservation. I do not deny that this is true to a certain extent; but the real question is the one which divides you into two parts, and which also divides the country, not into two parts of nearly equal proportions, as is the case here, but into proportions more clearly cut.

"Are these all the causes of our divisions? Alas! this one cause is in itself very great, very grave, very deep: but there are yet others. You know our history as well as I do. Look at the centuries that have passed away; see how division, discord, if I may say so, has ravened against our country, what evils she has showered upon us!

"There are then here three dynasties, these two Republics. Each says: 'See as I see! Govern as I wish!'

"It must be admitted that if this is said on one side, it may be said on the other.

"On all sides alike is said: 'Govern as I wish, govern according to my views!'

"What do you wish a Government to do in this situation? How many times have I been told: 'Put yourself on our side, we will follow you!'

"Well, gentlemen, here I find the principle of my conduct, the principle of the conduct of my honourable colleagues, who have never differed from me on the general direction. Yes! What is wanted in this situation is not a party Government, I am not afraid to say so, it is a Government which shall be inexorable in the presence of disorder, pitiless even till order is re-established, till peace is restored to the country, and which, at the same time, when the battle and the disorder are over, becomes calm, impartial, reconciliatory.

"That is not a double-faced Government, it is a Government of enlightened men. And if, in this country, you were to create a party Government, you may be assured that the public repose would not last long.

"Treat this policy with contempt, even with pity, as was done yesterday; I do not fear the arrogance of anybody; by my life, by my acts, and perhaps by some very modest intellectual qualities, I am capable of supporting disdain."

M. Thiers had always refused to bow before this policy of parties. He rejected their authority, their competence; "I do not mean to appear before the bar of parties; before them I am in the wrong; but I am not in the wrong before history; I deserve to appear before her."

If, at Bordeaux, the Assembly had abandoned itself to the party passions, would it have been able to create a power, finances, armies? Would it have obtained the evacuation of the territory from the enemy? It was then necessary that everybody should put his preferences on one side.

And now, here were the deeds, the work, accomplished in two years; the peace signed, the Commune beaten, the indemnity of war paid,—"the payment of the last milliard is about to begin in a week,"—the complete evacuation of the territory is effected. That had been obtained, thanks to the

assistance of all the world, and because all the world had been united and had confidence.

This picture once completed, M. Thiers, after having rapidly outwitted the plan which consisted in attacking him in the name of a Conservative interest, traced out in his turn his own attack, and did not mince matters.

"The question which divides us, we must be honest, is the question of Monarchy or Republic. As for me," added the speaker bravely, "I have taken my line.

"I have made my decision upon the question of the Republic. I have made it, yes, I have made it, do you know why? When a man is in his study with his books, his beloved books, which he is so happy to pore over, where he is an eye-witness of the injustices which other men have experienced, where he is only responsible, and only judged before his own conscience, well, when a man has this good fortune, which perhaps you will restore to me—and you will make me very happy by doing so—when a man has that good fortune, he can deliberate like a philosopher, like Montesquieu, upon the advantages and disadvantages of the Republic; he can weigh the beauties of Monarchy.

"But when a man is in the seat of Government, he has to take his line."

"Under these conditions, to take a line," continued M. Thiers, "is not an impatience of theory on our part, a satisfaction of our personal opinion, it is the recognition of a practical necessity."

"And the reason which has determined me, who am an old partisan of Monarchy, over and above the judgment that I formed in considering the march of events in the civilized world, is that, to-day, for you, for me, practically, the Monarchy is absolutely impossible.

"And I do not wish to cause you any further displeasure by giving you motives. But you know it well, and this it is which justifies you in not coming forward in the name of your faith, and proposing to us the re-establishment of the Monarchy; for, in a word, you have the right. Since in this place such or

such a Republic is proposed, you have the right to propose such or such a Monarchy. Why do you not do so? Why do you, you who are more calm than such and such others,—I do not wish to be personal,—why do you tell them that it would be imprudent to come here and propose the Monarchy? Why, for example, when polemics are opened between you and us, do you hasten to say, 'No, it is not as Monarchists that we speak, it is as Conservatives'? The reason is, let us admit it in good faith, because practically to-day the Monarchy is impossible. I have no need to tell you once again the reason, it is in the minds of all of you; there is only one throne, and there cannot be three occupants."

In this difficulty the Assembly too must itself act and determine. It claimed the constituent power. It was granted to it. Let it exercise it. M. Thiers for his part, had never drawn back, did not draw back before this necessity which was imposed. He set forth with imperturbable logic the whole development of his recent policy which frightened the majority. The policy of the Message: "How do you intend us," asked M. Thiers, "to make organic laws, if nothing is fixed as to the principles of the Government?"

The pledge was taken before the Committee of Thirty to bring organic laws before the Assembly, and lastly the bringing forward, at the opening of the present session, of those laws which were so much despised. They did not even wish to know what they were. Well! M. Thiers would explain them to the Assembly, he would explain them to the country.

He traced the broad lines of the constitutional system which would have had the preference: at the base universal suffrage neither modified nor restrained, but educated, moralized and purified. The legislative power composed of two Chambers; in the

department of the executive power a President, whose election would be entrusted to the National Assembly and the General Councils, this President having the right of dissolution with the concurrence of the second chamber.

And then comparing their preparation, so well matured, so fruitful, to the hesitations, to the barren inclinations, the broken efforts of a majority which dashed fruitlessly into the enterprise of the fusion, he turned upon it the alleged abandonment of Conservative principles which was made a grievance against himself :—

"Gentlemen, here, in my opinion, is the real Conservative policy; it is that policy which, passing between all the extremes, fastens itself on the point where the evident interest of the country lies. We perform the most Conservative act in the world, when we bring you the laws of this Conservative Republic, saying to one party: 'Make the sacrifice of voting for a form, which is practically the only possible form, give it a legal character'; and when we say to the others: 'Whatever you may think'—pardon me this language—'of this Assembly towards which you are severe, as others are towards us, in which you have no confidence; we, instead of wishing to dissolve it, wish, so far as we are concerned, that it may last long enough to make the laws of this Conservative Republic.'"

Once again M. Thiers was a prophet. The Assembly, alike on the Right and the Left, was refusing to submit to the fatality, which however lay in it, and which the clear-sighted old man alone discerned, that of founding the Republic.

He concluded. His peroration is full of both vigour and melancholy. It is a farewell, and it is also a sarcasm. He pays back to his opponents in one moment the severities with which they overwhelmed him.

"Now, I come to the end of this speech. The Conservative

policy is such as I have just described; it is that which is placed between the extremes, between those who do not wish to form a constitution, because in doing so, they could not constitute the Monarchy, and those who wish that some other Assembly than yourselves should do this work, who do not wish to leave you the time to make its laws, because they hope to get from a constituent Assembly the satisfaction of what they call their convictions, and which they have a perfect right so to term.

"It is between these two extremes that our policy picks its way. This policy, I repeat, is the one which is placed between all the extremes, guaranteeing material order in an infallible manner, and trying to re-establish moral order by the solution of the difficult questions, a solution abandoned to you, for it is your duty to examine these laws, to discuss them, to devote the necessary time to the task.

"I know well that we were told yesterday, that these means were insufficient. For my own part I know of no others.

"We were told with a pity by which I was deeply touched—(*smiles*)—that our lot was lamented, that we were going to be the creatures—whose creatures?—the creatures—of Radicalism. For myself a dismal ending was predicted. I have braved it more than once in the execution of my duty; I am not sure that I have braved it for the last time.

"And then we were told that over and above a miserable end, there was a disagreeable circumstance; it was the additional vexation of ridicule.

"I may be permitted to think that very hard. A man who should have served his country all his life, who should have sacrificed his popularity in the most difficult times for truth, who should have rendered services, which I do not claim to have rendered, such a man might perhaps be able to treat with pity men like those who are sitting on these benches. (*The speaker points to the Ministers' benches.*)

"I thank the speaker for his sympathetic sentiments (*laughter on the Left*). Will he permit me to render him the equivalent, and to tell him that I too feel pity for him? He will have no more of a majority than we have; but he, too, will be a creature: I will tell him whose . . . the creature of a patron whom the old Duc de Broglie would have rejected with horror: he will be the creature of the Empire!"

The speech of M. Thiers was listened to in deep silence: "I was not interrupted one single time," he says, "in spite of all the sharpness and even roughness that there was in my words. They did not wish to compromise anything by imprudent incidents." [1]

The last words pronounced, a long agitation followed. The speech was "adroit and proud, the most persuasive perhaps that he ever uttered." [2] And then at the moment when the sacrifice was being prepared, men thought of all that was great and dignified in the victim. Nearly all the deputies rose to their feet, stood in their places, and gave themselves up to animated conversations. The sitting was suspended for more than half an hour.

The majority was taking breath; but it was not hesitating. M. Thiers was condemned. He must be executed without loss of time.

The law required that the sitting should be adjourned after a speech from the President of the Republic. It was nearly noon. The second sitting was fixed for two o'clock.

M. Buffet added: "Without the presence of the President of the Republic."

M. Thiers did not accept this last declaration of M. Buffet without protest. Already in the letter by which he demanded to take part in the debate, he had not been able to resist the temptation to hurl an epigram against the law of the Committee of Thirty.

This time he went up to M. Buffet and announced to him his intention of being present at the end of the debate. A very lively dialogue took place.

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 408.
[2] Vicomte de Meaux, *Souvenirs*.

"Your presence in the assembly, under any form whatever is formally forbidden by the law," replied the President of the Chamber.

"And if I take my place in the President's gallery," replied M. Thiers, sharply, "what will you be able to do?"

"I shall immediately have that gallery and all the others cleared, if necessary," said M. Buffet without hesitation.

M. Thiers was beaten.

It is said that even up to the end some hope remained in him. He would not understand that the will of M. Buffet prevented him from being present at his own execution.

At two o'clock, in the second sitting, M. Casimir Périer, Minister of Home Affairs, spoke in the name of the new members of the Cabinet.

The chief object of his intervention was to demonstrate the solidarity of the Ministry with the President. At the same time he indicated, in the face of the social peril, the Monarchist plot; he denounced the coalition without a future, which in the event of success would be master of power, and lastly he affirmed in a startling fashion, he, a Royalist of yesterday, the heir to a name like that of Casimir-Périer, the necessity of founding the Republic.

The closure of the debate was declared.

M. Ernoul proposed the following Order of the day:—

The National Assembly, considering that the form of Government is not under discussion;

That the Assembly is in the possession of constitutional laws presented in virtue of one of its decisions, which it ought to examine;

But that to-day it is important to reassure the country by

making a resolutely Conservative policy prevail in the Government;

Regrets that the recent ministerial modifications have not given Conservative interests the satisfaction which they had the right to expect;

And passes to the Order of the day.

The plan elaborated by the Duc de Broglie was followed exactly. The question of institution was put on one side to consider exclusively the political question. The form of government mattered little, provided that, in the witty words of M. Batbie, it was a "fighting Government."

The division was about to be taken. Although all precautions had been taken the result might be considered as doubtful. The partisans of M. Thiers had counted themselves recently in the vote for the election of M. Martel, and they had appeared the more numerous. The direct intervention of the President had always up to that time had the effect of bringing in some waverers. As generally happens, several voters, anxious to be reckoned among the majority of the morrow, waited for a definite indication to appease the passing disturbance of their consciences.

The Target Group

Then was seen mounting to the tribune a member of the Right Centre, M. target, a friend of M. Thiers and a brother-in-law of M. Buffet, "anxious," he said, "to avoid any ambiguity in the division." He read the following declaration:

"While associating ourselves with the Order of the day, in order to clearly define the thought and bearing of our vote, we declare ourselves resolved to accept the Republican solution such as it results from the constitutional laws brought forward by the Government, and to put an end to a provisional arrangement, which compromises the material interests of the country. We intend, in adopting M. Ernoul's Order of the day, to manifest the thought that the Government of the President of the Republic

ought henceforth by its actions to make a clear and energetically Conservative policy prevail."

M. Target spoke in the name of the "conservative Republicans." Thus in one single phrase and one single formula the two opposing postulates were brought together. Eyes were closed to the real objective of the battle, the downfall of M. Thiers: while proclaiming the Republic they put the founder or defender of the Republic on one side.

Energetically applauded on the Right and Right Centre the declaration of M. Target raised protests on the Left. The names of the signatories to the declaration were demanded. M. Buffet obligingly read them out: MM. Target, Paul Cottin, Prétavoine, Balsan, Mathieu Bodet, Lefébure, Caillaux, Eugène Tallon, Louis Passy, Albert Delacour, Léon Vingtain, Deseilligny, Dufournel, Daguilhon, E. Martell, "a small battalion which settled the fight."

The Order of the day pure and simple was proposed. M. Dufaure declared that the Government accepted that Order of the day. It was put to the vote and rejected by 362 to 348.

The Government of M. Thiers was beaten by a majority of 14.

An indescribable tumult followed the declaration of the division.

MM. Broët and Antonin Lefèvre-Pontalis tried to save M. Thiers by proposing an Order of the day expressing confidence. But it was too late. The dice were cast.

The division on the Ernoul Order of the day was proceeded to. The Left demanded voting at the tribune, which would have catalogued the voters. It was rejected by 360 to 344. The coalition won by a majority of 16.

It proposed to use its victory at once. M. Baragnon went to the tribune and asked the Government to make known its intentions. He also proposed a fresh sitting at nine o'clock the same evening.

M. Dufaure protested in the name of the Government against a haste which was almost insulting. "Do not be alarmed," he said, with hard irony, "France will not remain without a Government." He further added that the Ministers were going to wait upon the President of the Republic; they raised no opposition to a night sitting, if the Assembly judged it convenient.

M. Emanuel Arago followed him to point out that they were meeting without an Order of the day, and consequently with the single object of calling on M. Thiers to have his resignation to give in, and to surrender his place to his successor on the spot.

That was in fact the formal wish of the majority.

After the sitting the members of the committees of the four Parliamentary groups of the majority met under the presidency of General Changarnier, to form their plans for one last time. First, it was asked what would be done if M. Thiers, limiting himself to a change of Ministry, retained the power. It was reckoned that one single man might be summoned by M. Thiers, that would be M. de Goulard, the man who was wittily called "the Polignac of the provisional arrangement." M. Daru was charged to meet M. de Goulard and to warn him that, if he accepted any kind of mission from M. Thiers, the Right would not support him. All the precautions were taken. Now it was necessary to think about the designation of a successor to M. Thiers.

Choice of a new President

Nearly all the members of the majority were in the secret of the decisions come to at the meeting of the 18th of May at the Duc de Broglie's house. However, General Changarnier knew nothing. Some friends mentioned his name. He hardly concealed that he considered himself elected. But M. Baragnon proposed Marshal MacMahon. The sentiments of the Assembly were revealed by his very embarrassment. Then the old General understood. "His mouth twisted a little under his grey moustache"; he passed his hand over his forehead, and, taking his line like a man of action, he executed himself gallantly; he renounced, as he had before renounced in 1848, and this time, even without apparent bitterness.

"Gentlemen," he said in a firm voice, "if you believe that the name of Marshal MacMahon is the one which meets the situation best, I wish to be the first to propose it and proclaim it."

The meeting, given its liberty, hailed the name of the Marshal.

As M. Baragnon had demanded, the third sitting of the day was held at nine o'clock in the evening.

Immediately after the passing of the minutes, M. Dufaure went to the tribune, and made the following declaration :—

"As I had the honour to announce to you at the end of your last sitting, my colleagues and myself withdrew to the presence of the President of the Republic. We have given in to him our resignations; he has consented to accept them, and he has at the same time placed in my hands the message which I transmit to the President of the Assembly."

M. Buffet then made known the Message by which M. Thiers resigned :—

VERSAILLES, *May* 24, 1873.

MR. PRESIDENT,—I have the honour to remit to the National Assembly my resignation of the functions of President of the Republic, which it had conferred upon me.

I have no need to add that the Government will fulfil all its duties till it has been regularly replaced.

Receive the assurance of my high consideration.

(Signed) A. THIERS.
Member of the National Assembly.

The signature was hardly read when General Changarnier demanded permission to speak in order to propose to proceed immediately to the election of the new President of the Republic.

Without granting him the word, M. Buffet read out the following motion :—

The undersigned, in view of the resignation of M. Thiers, President of the French Republic, propose to the Assembly to proceed immediately to the ballot on the nomination of his successor.

In his haste M. Buffet omitted to take formal notice of the resignation of the President. On an observation offered by General Billot on this subject he did so, and added some words also, interrupted by the Left. He was obliged to renounce the delivery of a panegyric on M. Thiers.

After having protested, he put General Changarnier's motion to the vote tending to nominate the President of the Republic immediately.

Some members of the Left demanded the remission of this motion to the Committees. But it was observed that this was not the case of a motion but of a nomination. The vote was taken.

Out of 721 members who were present at the sitting, 391 only took part in the voting. The entire Left abstained, with the single exception of M. Laurier, who voted for M. Grévy. Marshal

MacMahon was elected by 390 votes. It was eleven o'clock at night.

The Bureau repaired to Marshal MacMahon to notify to him the decision of the National Assembly.

Half an hour afterwards the sitting was resumed and M. Buffet made the following declaration :—

"Gentlemen, in conformity with the orders of the Assembly, a deputation of the Bureau, of which I had the honour to form part, waited upon Marshal MacMahon and informed him of the decision of the Assembly.

"I have to say that in order to overcome the resistance, the objections, and the scruples of the illustrious Marshal we were obliged to make an energetic appeal to that spirit of devotion and sacrifice to the country, of which the Marshal has already given so many proofs, and of which he affords a still more striking proof to-day in accepting the lofty but difficult functions which the Assembly confides to him.

"I am charged by the Marshal—and this perhaps is for the rest superfluous—to express the hope and the conviction that the present Ministers will continue to exercise their functions till a new Ministry has been formed."

The sitting was adjourned at ten minutes before midnight.

M. Thiers was turned out, and he was replaced.

Events had been hurried on for fear a last skilful stroke of the old parliamentary hand might turn them in his favour. But by the law of the Thirty, he was swathed in solid swaddling bands, which M. Buffet held in a firm hand. Any movement was impossible for him. His fall was not a revolution, but an execution.

Effects of the Fall of M. Thiers in France and Abroad

The disappearance of M. Thiers caused deep emotion in France and Europe. Although the event was foreseen, there yet was surprise and anxiety. France lost something of the esteem which her conduct

under the direction of the old President had won for her since the war. The parties carried the day; it might be feared that the era of crises was reopened.

The Right turned M. Thiers out, even before he had put into execution the convention for the liberation which he had concluded two months before, as if it had been wished to rob him of the honour of the great transaction which his tenacious will had accomplished. He had exclaimed much, perhaps over much, against the ingratitude of the parties; but now he was justified. There was something unbecoming in the precipitation of the attack and the victory.

It is said that gratitude has nothing to do with politics, and that neither constitutions nor laws are made from a sense of obligation. That is true. But the solutions which were brought on were neither so clear nor so successful, that it was necessary to take so roughly from M. Thiers a power of which he did not make a very bad use. No, it was not for the country that men trembled, it was for a political system whose last chances were disappearing from day to day.

The Monarchy, already wounded and half dead, was the body over which they fought. M. Thiers, on the very eve of the Parliamentary tournament which brought about his fall, explained with his habitual precision and clearness the real subject of the conflict: "The defeated candidates in the recent elections, all Conservatives of the Right, were beaten because of Monarchism (a word borrowed from the political dialect), real or suspected. That is the naked truth; but in a certain quarter anybody who supports the Government is called a

'red.' There is then no reason to be alarmed at the point at which it is done, honestly or by a calculated pretence. For the rest we are going to bring forward laws which we hope will prove that we are not falling asleep on the brink of a precipice, and that in order to save the future, we will do all that is humanly possible."

And it is precisely because he proposed these laws that M. Thiers was thrown over the precipice on the edge of which he was leaning.

M. Thiers had rendered services to France; he would still render them, that was possible; but it was necessary that he should fall before having founded the Republic, that is the real reason of his fall.

In this crowning debate, which was formulated in two terms: Republic or Monarchy, there was a still graver debate. The France of the past once more delivered battle on new France. It was felt that "democracy," to use the expression already employed, "was running bank high." The inundation was reaching the last refuges. The "new social strata" rose one upon the other like menacing waves. The Barodet election was only an incident in the immense impulse.

M. Thiers was turned out by the Right. He would have been turned out by the Left. The barriers which he had tried to raise were as fragile as those "chineseries" which he so much derided. They had succeeded in putting chains on him. Did they aspire to hobbling a whole country? Like the infant Hercules universal suffrage broke all the bonds that were placed on it. Now its place had to be found for it, or rather the ground had to be cleared for it; henceforth the whole ground belonged to it.

Note the blindness of political passion. The Conservatives did not see that in turning out M. Thiers they turned out the last of the Conservatives. The Republicans themselves did not understand that the Assembly, which they attacked so violently, would found the Republican system in France for long years.

Marshal MacMahon

In order to obtain the acceptance of Marshal MacMahon it had been necessary, in spite of the engagements already entered on, " to overcome his resistance, his objections, and his scruples."

He was present, it appears, at the sitting of the Assembly beside Mme. Dufaure; he said to her: " Do make your husband speak: with him all will go well. But let M. Thiers hold his tongue, he would embroil everything." His presence became awkward, a little so for everybody. " He was induced to quit the Hall without quite knowing why."

When the Bureau of the Assembly came to his house, he himself was returning from a visit to M. Thiers, and he crossed the room in which his aides-de-camp were, saying to them that he could not accept.[1]

In fact he did not forget that M. Thiers had made him commander-in-chief of the army. M. Thiers knew these scruples of the hero of Magenta. We have recalled how on the occasion of the action brought against the *Figaro* by General Trochu, the Marshal had declared, in the presence of M. Thiers, that he did not think it right that, being in the morning a General of Napoleon III, the ex-Governor of Paris should have consented in the evening to be the General of the Republic.

[1] Vicomte de Meaux, *Souvenirs*.

M. Thiers had interpreted these words in the sense attributed to them by General Cissey:

"He wished to say that, having been your general, he would never consent to be the General of your adversaries." [1]

These were the words which had made M. Thiers believe, as he said to M. Jules Simon, that Marshal MacMahon would refuse to be his successor.

The Marshal's hesitation was due to his loyalty. He understood, however, from the language of M. Buffet that the fate of M. Thiers was settled, and that whatever happened, he would leave the Presidency.

Before replying to the delegation from the Assembly, the Marshal called on M. Thiers, and, informing him of the vote which had just been passed, asked him if he ought to accept. M. Thiers was not in a temper to consider coolly a political difficulty, whose point of departure was his own fall.

"You are the only judge," he replied drily to the Marshal.

"If you promise me to reconsider your determination and to withdraw your resignation, I shall refuse."

"As for that, Marshal, in this matter I am the only judge. I have never played in a comedy, and I will never play in that one."

The words were unjust and out of place. The situation evidently had no reasonable issue except consent. Marshal MacMahon understood that before being "General of M. Thiers" he was General of the Assembly, of the Sovereign Assembly, and,

[1] *Notes et Souvenirs*, p. 267.

in consequence, of the country. Like a disciplined soldier he made his decision. He found the delegation of the Assembly still at his house: his first word was a word of obedience:

"Since it is in some sense a duty to the public safety which you wish to impose on me," said he, "I submit."

And he added:

"Five minutes ago I accepted the functions of President; I count that every one, like myself, thinks of the sacred interests of the country. Thank you, gentlemen, I count upon help from all quarters, and I esteem it too much not to appreciate it."

M. Buffet made haste to regain the Chair. The sitting was already adjourned when the new President of the Republic sent the following letter to the Palace at Versailles, addressed to the National Assembly:—

REPRESENTATIVES,—

I obey the will of the Assembly, the depository of the National sovereignty, in accepting the office of President of the Republic. This is a heavy responsibility imposed on my patriotism. But with the help of God, the devotion of our army, which will always be the army of the law, the support of all honourable men, we will continue together the work of the liberation of our territory and the re-establishment of moral order in our country; we will maintain internal peace and the principles upon which society rests.

I give you my word for it as a man and a soldier.

Marshal MACMAHON,
DUC DE MAGENTA.

And the same evening Marshal MacMahon, second President of the French Republic, took possession of his functions by addressing to the prefects the following proclamation, which was posted up on Sunday, the 25th of May, over all France; M.

Casimir-Périer, Minister of Home Affairs, had in fact given orders that all the telegraph offices should remain open during the night :

TO THE PREFECTS : I have just been called by the confidence of the National Assembly to the Presidency of the Republic.

No change will be made in the existing laws and institutions.

I answer for the material order, and I count upon your vigilance and your patriotic assistance.

The Ministry will be appointed this very day.

The President of the Republic,
Marshal MACMAHON.

Conclusion

Thus ends the drama of these three years in which France was so unfortunate.

The nineteenth century had seen her great and prosperous. Even amid her mistakes and fits of impulse she had served and honoured humanity. After the Revolution the Napoleonic victories had conquered and freed the peoples. French literature, science, art had ceaselessly enriched the heritage of civilization.

And this century was not yet drawing to its close when it saw France once again conquered, dismembered. The country had been overwhelmed; the population had been diminished by two millions; the wealth of the nation had suffered an unprecedented loss. Civil war had followed the foreign war ; the possibility of a separation between Paris and France had shown itself for a moment. Two provinces, the best, the best beloved, had been torn away. France, in the cruel language of her adversaries, had been "drained of her blood." Her death might be expected.

Her generous policy had encouraged in the case of others the realization of that unity, of which

she had herself set the example. She had paid no attention to the warnings which came to her not only from her own sons, but from abroad. In 1866 some one said in public and with deliberate reference to her: "It cannot be desirable for France that a power superior in force should rise in Germany—an empire of seventy-five millions of men, reaching up to the Rhine." These words had been spoken by Count Bismarck in the full publicity of the Prussian Parliament. They denounced the peril from Austria. France had woken up faced with the peril from Prussia.[1]

Germany, healed of the long train of consequences of the Thirty Years' War, was recovering the place which she had occupied in Europe in the Middle Ages; again she had become the Empire. But the axis was in the north and not in the south. The new Empire had determined to be proclaimed at Versailles.

The compact mass, which constituted Germany, thus formed in the centre of Europe, weighed first upon France. Confined within narrower frontiers, she was forced upon the western seas. The preponderance which her population, her armies, her language, her influence, assured to her in Europe, disappeared by reason of the relative strength of the new aggregations.

On the Rhine this phase of the "Heritage of Burgundy" was settled against her. A solution had intervened, which it was wished to believe final. The victory affirmed that beyond the frontier there was no longer France.

But things are not so simple. To begin with,

[1] *Speeches of Prince Bismarck*, t. ii. p. 40.

even in the fact of the separation the will had not bent. In the nineteenth century the language already heard in the fifteenth was repeated. "The land taken, the heart will not move." The community of soul lasted: "I am not so fond as all that of having a quantity of Frenchmen among us," Bismarck had said; and he further said: "We must not flatter ourselves with the prospect of arriving very quickly at the conclusion that the situation in Alsace will be the same as in Thuringia in reference to German sentiment." He deliberately abstained from discussing a similar eventuality for the populations of Lorraine. These words and this silence came from a correct sentiment. The problem remains.

In any case there remains another France which survives and subsists beyond the frontiers. It is the France which a long history has in some sense caused to penetrate into the common life of Europe, it is the France which finds its strength in its activity, its examples, its influence, its radiance. This is an impalpable, an indestructible France. "Then there is some France everywhere!" said a soldier.[1]

This imperishable France had re-discovered herself endowed with singular vivacity and vitality on the morrow of the disasters which had overwhelmed her. Her adversaries had been so astounded at this resurrection that they made it a grievance against her.

This rapid resurrection comes from the French people, from its springiness, its optimism, its good temper. When France was still prostrate and overwhelmed, she smiled through her tears. Versatile and light-hearted, she believes but little

[1] H. de Balzac, *La Duchesse de Langeais.*

in perpetuity and durability in human works. She has seen many others in the course of her long history. She lets the storm pass by and returns to her work.

Hardly had a few months gone by after the war and the Commune, when there was an incredible outburst of activity and prosperity in France. We shall have to set forth in the first pages of our next volume—what we have not been able to say in this—the life of the country, the movements of opinion, the manifestations of this resurrection and renewal. They were so numerous, so diverse, in business, in industrial products, in literature, in science, in the arts, in the guidance of the public intelligence, that they deserve to be pointed out in detail; they were so brilliant that, in spite of the perversity of an external opinion, prejudiced—and slightly disappointed—they impressed all, even the indifferent and the hostile.

It is easy to distinguish something of the renascent activities of the nation in the play of the political organisms which came into work as soon as the crisis developed to its end: the Government of National Defence, the Assembly of Versailles, and the Government of M. Thiers.

It would be beyond my subject to lay stress on the nobility of sentiment which animated the men of the 4th of September; their desperate efforts added something to the historical physiognomy of France.

And in speaking of the National Assembly we are equally unembarrassed. France had elected it under circumstances in which misfortunes, confusion, and disorder would have justified many mistakes. Now nobody to-day disputes the fact that the

Assembly which received its mandate from the people was worthy of that people, and level with the needs of the occasion. It knew how to resist the temptations of its own impulses. Common sense and love of country stopped many faults when on the point of being committed. It accomplished slowly, but with perseverance, the work of re-establishment for which it had been chosen. It saw great ability emerge, noble character, and not one base soul.

Is it not remarkable that at such a crisis, when France seemed to be abandoned of God and man, when the responsible Government had come down with a crash, when so many competing elements might have forced their way, no man wished to take any road but the straight road. There was no occasion to take precautions against the treacherous ambitions of a House of Guise, nor the duplicity of a Fouché, nor the corrupt intriguings of a Talleyrand. Never was France more honestly and more loyally loved.

M. Thiers, with all his defects and littlenesses, was a competent man with authority and devotion, an excellent patriot; his superior intelligence, his prodigious activity, his long public life, his studies had provided him with a special preparation for the part which was imposed on him by circumstances.

Public opinion trusted him as he deserved. In fact, there are few peoples which under analogous circumstances would have seen issue from their bosom a Head of the State like this "little tradesman with the proud soul."

The task which weighed upon him was threefold: to conclude peace; repair the ills caused by the war;

to give the country a durable political form, if not a constitution.

In the negotiations for the preliminaries of peace, M. Thiers had not perhaps time to display his great qualities. Pledged in advance to the peace party, he was taken by surprise, finding none of that backing which is naturally given by a regular Government, and an administration prepared and carried along on traditional lines. He thought he was obliged to negotiate alone, face to face with the most formidable of opponents, and a victorious opponent, Prince Bismarck.

By the light of the revelations which come out every day the question may be debated whether M. Thiers would have been able to conclude a more advantageous treaty, and whether he could have saved Metz. He perhaps neglected the Conference of London a little more than he should have done. He did not take sufficiently into account the support which the determination of Gambetta and our Generals to pursue the war to the very end might have afforded him, if only for the purposes of negotiation.

But around him everybody wanted peace. He would not have been followed if he had allowed even the diplomatic necessity of a resumption of hostilities to peep out. He was disarmed by his own countrymen even more than by his adversaries. Further, he negotiated at a distance of some leagues from Paris, still under arms and already in insurrection. Nevertheless he saved Belfort, and obtained a reduction of one milliard upon the figure of the indemnity.

In the whole of the diplomatic labours which followed the fatal negotiation, in the repatriation of prisoners, liquidation of the indemnity, progressive

evacuation of the territory, passing of the Army Bill, he showed an energy, a pliant and intelligent tenacity, which prove what he would have been able to do at the outset if he had been better seconded, and if the circumstances had not been so difficult.

He was the organizer of the great loans, and the liberator of the territory. His wisdom, his experience, his competence gave securities for France up to a certain point. France paid somewhat dearly for the feverish haste of the illustrious old man. But was it possible to pay too dearly for the prompt liberation of the occupied provinces and of the country ?

In the second part of his task M. Thiers was truly admirable and irreproachable. He set his hand to all the great projects, and all the great works. He re-constituted the old army, and prepared the new army. He knotted up again the relations with Europe. He knew how to steer between the double cliffs of the Roman question. Budgets, loans, taxes, administrative re-organization, commerce and industry, everything bears his mark and impress. His hobbies even had something good in them, since they, on the whole, brought the eye of the master under his clear spectacles to bear upon everything.

His diplomatic correspondence, abundant, precise, clever, going straight to the point, and with an unusual ease and quickness, reveals the perpetual vigilance of the man of light slumbers, whom the slightest noise put on the alert, who was entirely absorbed by no occupation, and who was not overwhelmed by any work, and any duty.

At the tribune, in his drawing-room, in the

Committees and Conferences, he was always ready, and always prepared. A patriot with experience, he flattered the noble victim, and gave her back her vigour simply by the appeal of a familiar voice, in which there was the echo of history. He was full of the past. The present did not prevent him from thinking unceasingly of the future. At seventy-five years of age he preserved distant hopes, and immense ideas.

As to the third part of his work, opinions are more divided. The still living political passions have not yet reached the period of impartiality. A Monarchist by origin, by associations, and perhaps by sentiment, M. Thiers was the originator of the Republic. Some have said that he was only thinking of remaining in power, and perpetuating a provisional arrangement, which made him permanent at the Presidency. He defended himself forcibly against this illiberal judgment. His nervous temperament, and disappointing skill sometimes gave authority to these suspicions. But the revelations that we now possess as to the difficulties which he encountered at home and abroad, and the accurate knowledge of facts, to which he alone held the key, plead for him, for his prudence, for his good faith.

He lost interest in the cause of Monarchy because a durable restoration seemed to him impossible of realization. The country did not want it. The dynastic parties themselves could never abandon their special preferences. They tore one another cruelly. It has been said that his influence turned more than a hundred members of the Assembly from the Monarchical cause, who had been attached to it, the men like Dufaure, Casimir-Périer, Léon Say, Rémusat. But would these men have fol-

lowed if he had not brought them reasons over and above his example? He moved towards the Republic because he understood that France, disgusted with her saviours, had no longer any confidence except in herself, and that after the revolutions and catastrophes which had put an end to the different monarchial experiments, she herself wished to take into her own hand the guidance of her own destinies.

Man of the middle classes and Monarchist as he was, after having discerned the future of the democracy and the Republic, this was no act of senile egotism, it was a profound and rare prescience. An intelligence less upright and less firm would have been tempted to play the part of Monk. For the rest, he was turned out for having declared himself in favour of the Republic, and for having submitted to the Assembly a scheme for a Republican constitution. His personal ambitions then must have been singularly ill-guided. The vote of the Assembly, which removed him from the Presidency, opened a grave constitutional crisis. After a long agitation the Assembly was obliged to come back to the point at which it was when it turned him out. If he had been listened to and followed, this dangerous or at least barren crisis would have been avoided.

Thirty-three years of peace at home and abroad date from his Consulship. During these long years France has served her apprenticeship in liberty. She has not yet taken her degree. The democracy has committed mistakes for which all the parties, for that matter, are responsible, and it commits fresh mistakes every day. But what system of government can proclaim itself impeccable? From 1815 to 1845 the period is also one of thirty-three years, and this simple appeal to the dates settles

the discussion, if at least the question of stability is the subject of debate.

Republican France has set herself to her tasks pacifically, setting the example of a people pursuing its destiny under the weight of a heavy past, in spite of the difficulties and ambuscades with which it is surrounded.

She has recovered alliances and sympathies outside which theory claimed to forbid to her. She has extended her domains beyond the seas, and is preparing to enter valiantly upon the era of world-wide competition, which is announced for the near future. She has resumed her contact with the Mediterranean, which was her cradle. Always active and always generous, nothing human is alien to her. She accepts resolutely all her tasks and all her duties. She remains faithful to the confident and optimistic formula which was always hers. The experience of the past has taught her that victory or defeat are only military and diplomatic incidents in the course of a secular existence, and in the uninterrupted development of her dramatic history.

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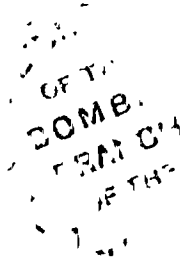

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